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General Assembly
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Official Records

54th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 19 November 2007, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kerim ..... (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Al Bayati (Iraq), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda items 71 and 72 (*continued*)

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

Report of the Secretary-General (A/62/324 and Corr.1)

(a) Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/62/72, A/62/83, A/62/87 and A/62/323)

(b) Special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

Report of the Secretary-General (A/62/310)

(c) Assistance to the Palestinian people

Report of the Secretary-General (A/62/82)

(d) Strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster

Report of the Secretary-General (A/62/467)

Draft resolution (A/62/L.12)

Assistance to survivors of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, particularly orphans, widows and victims of sexual violence

Report of the Secretary-General (A/62/310)

The Acting President: Before proceeding further, I would like to inform members of a correction to the second line, in the English texts, of operative paragraph 14 of draft resolution A/62/L.12. That line should read "within existing resources, the efforts of the United Nations system and with other", adding the word "with". The paragraph will then continue as reflected in the document.

Mr. Davide (Philippines): Let me begin by expressing the solidarity of the Philippines with the Government and people of Bangladesh at this time of sorrow and suffering that the recent cyclone has caused to their nation. The Philippines expresses its heartfelt sympathy to the victims and assures Bangladesh and its people of the prayers and hopes of the Philippines for their early recovery from this catastrophe.

The Philippines commends and congratulates the Secretary-General on his report under agenda item 71, entitled "Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance" continued in document A/62/87. We fully concur with his conclusions and recommendations in the light of the severity of natural disasters that may be associated with climate change, and the need for special focus on developing countries. This is especially true with respect to their vulnerable peoples, due to the

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difficulties and constraints developing countries have in facing the immediate effects of these disasters, not only in mitigating the inevitable consequences of natural disasters, but also in finding measures and adopting strategies that would make their adaptation to the consequences of natural disasters a less painful experience. At the same time, they must work to ensure preparedness for future occurrences.

The Philippines takes particular note of the Secretary-General's report on humanitarian assistance and rehabilitation for the Philippines, which is included in his report in document A/62/310. My delegation is grateful for the comprehensive narrative of the assistance rendered by the United Nations to the Philippines in connection with the oil spill on 11 August 2006 from a tanker off the south-western coast of the Province of Guimaras, in the central Philippines, close to my own province of Cebu.

I was still in the Philippines when this tragic incident occurred. It was an unprecedented maritime disaster that caused severe damage which will take years to repair and for the affected areas to recover. The Philippines further takes note of the Secretary-General's recommendations and conclusions, which no doubt will send a strong message to the international community for its continued humanitarian support.

My country expresses its gratitude to the Secretary-General for his report on the Philippines and puts on record its debt of gratitude to all those who responded immediately and provided assistance to my country, both bilaterally and through the United Nations system, particularly through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNICEF, in the post-disaster rehabilitation phase. The rapid needs assessment mission, led by UNDP and involving the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Office of Civil Defense of the Philippine Government, drafted an early recovery assessment report that proved to be an essential guide to the measures to be taken. All the help extended to the Philippines, especially to those directly affected by the oil spill, lessened the tragic impact of this disaster. It has been said that gratitude is the language of the heart. In that regard, the Philippines' heart is full.

However, in paragraph 60 of his report, the Secretary-General concludes that

> "There is still significant need for additional support in achieving the longer-term objectives that include: full restoration of the damaged environment; further development and strengthening of alternative livelihood programmes; improved disaster risk management; preparedness and mitigation to build disaster-resilient communities; and promoting development in the tourism sector".

Over a year after this unfortunate calamity, the Province of Guimaras, its people and economy are still far from regaining normal life and the promise of a bright future. The oil retrieval operations from the sunken hull of the MT Solar 1 ended in April of this year, with less than 5,000 litres of bunker oil recovered, out of a total of over 2.1 million litres. This means that almost the entire load of oil was dispersed in the pristine waters off Guimaras. It seems difficult to describe this large amount — 2.1 million litres — as merely an "oil spill"; unlike a spill that can be easily cleaned up, the pernicious effects of this event will continue to be felt for many, many years.

We need not dwell on the obvious environmental or human respiratory-related health impact of the polluting oil. It should be noted, however, that the first rapid assessment of the oil spill, conducted by the University of the Philippines in Visayas, also found significant psycho-social effects on normal living conditions engendered by the loss of habitat and the strenuous clean-up efforts. The long-term effects on human health and the environment have yet to be evaluated or accounted for. In terms of the economy, the most direct effect of the oil spill remains the loss of livelihood for the affected population.

A recent study presented last month at the Ninth National Symposium on Marine Science revealed a 65 per cent decline in fish abundance in the waters off Guimaras since the event of August 2006. The Philippine Department of Environment and Natural Resources and mangrove experts also reported the death of at least 600 mature trees in mangroves that serve as breeding and feeding grounds for fish. These findings seemingly validate the observations and complaints of the fisherfolk and residents in the affected areas that their fish catch has substantially decreased.

The local tourism industry also has not recovered from the disaster, as tourist arrivals have decreased in

number compared to previous years. Even though only an estimated 20 per cent of beach tourism was actually affected by the oil spill, other destinations on the island suffered due to the impression that the entire island was contaminated by oil sludge. Unfortunately, even the indemnification provided by the International Oil Pollution Compensation Fund has been described as being insufficient in terms both of the amount and coverage.

Despite this sad, painful reality that I have just described, there is also much to be said for the optimism and resolve of the local authorities and the people of Guimaras to rise above adversity. The international community and the national Government have put in place plans and programmes to help speed up recovery, and the company whose oil caused these problems, PETRON, remains fully engaged in the healing process. It is hoped that, after hearing its name mentioned here, PETRON will do more.

My delegation hopes that the international community and the United Nations system will continue to render assistance and provide guidance, as needed, for the full recovery of the environment and the people of Guimaras. What they will do will also provide hope to other States and peoples who suffer from natural or man-made disasters.

Mr. Čekuolis (Lithuania): My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Portugal on behalf of the European Union. In addition, allow me to make the following comments.

Lithuania thanks the Secretary-General for his report submitted for consideration under agenda item 71 (d). We support the findings of the report and welcome the efforts of all relevant parties involved in studying, mitigating and minimizing the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster.

Lithuania has a number of people affected by the Chernobyl disaster, of whom about 6,000 are registered as belonging to the high-risk group and suffering from its consequences, as they took direct part in the clean-up and liquidation of the effects of the nuclear disaster.

Together with relevant non-profit organizations operating on behalf of the victims, the Government of Lithuania is pursuing a number of programmes and activities in the areas of social security and health care for people affected by Chernobyl. Legislation has been adopted to define the juridical status of persons affected while eliminating the consequences of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster. Relevant Government decisions provide for compensation to persons affected due to their participation in the clean-up of the nuclear accident or to their relatives in case of the demise of direct victims. If health conditions deteriorate, the persons affected are entitled to repeated compensation. They are also entitled to certain types of free medical treatment.

A national Chernobyl health centre has been established under the Ministry of Health. The centre keeps a database on individuals who participated in the Chernobyl clean-up, organizes regular health care check-ups, offers treatment and advice, analyses and publishes relevant data, organizes conferences on the health care of affected persons, and maintains ties with organizations that deal with radiation exposure issues. A special centre was established for children born to the families of affected individuals.

Some time ago, the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania adopted the 2006-2010 programme of health care for persons who took part in eliminating the consequences of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, aimed at providing relevant health care and seeking to minimize the rates of sickness, morbidity and disabilities. The programme also aims at contributing to international research on the impact of light radiation exposures. The programme is coordinated by the Chernobyl health centre of the Republic of Lithuania.

Mr. Pramudwinai (Thailand): I thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this joint meeting, which provides us with a timely and useful opportunity to call for the strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance.

At the outset, allow me also to join other colleagues in expressing our sympathy to the people of Bangladesh on its tragic national calamity. May I just add that Thailand has conveyed its deep condolences to the Government and people of Bangladesh and is working on its relief contribution to the people of that country.

The recent catastrophe once again serves as a warning sign on the devastating impacts of uncontrollable natural disasters derived from both natural phenomena and man-made activities. The more severe and frequent natural hazards are alerting us to

call for stronger cooperation in humanitarian assistance.

Thailand welcomes the comprehensive report of the Secretary-General concerning international cooperation on humanitarian assistance in natural disasters, from relief to development. The highlighted significant trends and their humanitarian implications lead us to set priorities in the field of humanitarian assistance and rapid response to disasters. The updated figures demonstrate that a number of hydro-meteorological and geological hazards, as well as epidemics, have increased dramatically. Those natural disasters have unleashed multiple hazards on society, particularly on the poorest, who are the most vulnerable. While provisions for recovery have been and are being provided through various international and national relief efforts, we expect to observe longer-term, well-coordinated and more concrete and concerted efforts to mitigate the impact of natural disasters through disaster prevention and preparedness measures.

Thailand wishes to see an integrated approach on the part of national or regional entities in partnering with such United Nations agencies as the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC)-UNESCO, the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and the United Nations Development Programme in order to ensure optimal synergies with other related efforts, avoid duplication of work and lead to a more effective and better coordinated response of humanitarian assistance to people affected by natural disasters and emergency situations.

We believe that humanitarian assistance should be firmly based on the actual needs on the ground and appropriate management, and equipped with sophisticated technology and sufficient resources. Strengthening preparedness, coordination and rapid response mechanisms in the wake of a disaster may provide an opportunity to mobilize support for investment in disaster preparedness and mitigation. However, mobilizing the resources involved is always one of the greatest concerns.

Thailand welcomes the establishment of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) to fill that gap and takes note with appreciation of the timely response it puts on the ground. Thailand has also contributed annually to CERF. The efficiency of fund allocation in the recent case of the Peruvian earthquake last August has proven that CERF is a useful mechanism for generating early and prompt response to disasters and helps solve the problem of financial assistance delays and shortages. We are looking to see that effective response again in the recent case of Bangladesh.

At the regional level, Thailand's $10-million contribution to establishing the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific Tsunami Regional Trust Fund, which is aimed at speeding up ongoing efforts to enhance national capacity and create a reliable tsunami warning system in the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia regions, has already assisted certain regional projects in disaster preparedness and in setting up an early warning system.

The Trust Fund was allocated to the Asian Disaster Reduction Centre for a training programme on community-based hazard map development for India and Bangladesh, as well as to the UNESCO/IOC project for strengthening tsunami warning and emergency responses by providing training workshops on the development of standard operating procedures in 16 countries located along the coastline of the Indian Ocean, from Iran to Timor-Leste. Also, a large portion of the fund was granted to the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre, which was entrusted at the Phuket ministerial meeting of 2005 as a regional focal point for the tsunami early warning system in the Indian Ocean. It has installed tide-gauge stations in the coastal areas of Myanmar, the Philippines and Viet Nam to form an initial network in detecting tsunamis.

At this time, more than half of the initial budget provided by the Thai and Swedish Governments in 2005 — in the amount of $12.5 million — has been allocated to the projects to which I have referred. Meanwhile, many associated projects are still waiting in the pipeline. The establishment of a comprehensive multi-nodal network thus still requires substantive support from all parties concerned to fully achieve its objectives and further contribute to disaster reduction and mitigation in all regions of the world. Thailand would therefore like to call upon developed countries to make efforts to provide more contributions and technical cooperation related to the development of a natural disaster warning system.

In that regard, Thailand would like to commend the recent pledge of $400,000 by the Government of the Republic of Korea and the $2,000 contribution from Nepalese Government. In terms of technical assistance, Thailand would like to thank the United States for sponsoring the deployment in the Indian Ocean, in December 2006, of the first deep-ocean assessment and reporting of tsunami device, the so-called DART buoy. This sophisticated device will assist in detecting tsunami susceptibly generated by convergent plate movement in the deep sea, which will help to save millions of people living along the Indian Ocean coastline.

At the national level, Thailand was among the 168 countries that adopted the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015. The strategic national action plan for disaster risk reduction is being prepared to provide direction for the country in undertaking disaster risk reduction over the next decade, in accordance with the context of the Hyogo Framework. The plan is expected to lead the country to meet the international safety standards by the year 2017.

I would like to further inform the Assembly that Thailand has paid great attention to the people who suffer the most when disaster strikes. We agree with the Secretary-General's report (A/62/323) concerning the evolving nature of risk patterns, which has implications for exposed groups in low-income settings.

We have made progress in integrating disaster reduction into local communities and school curriculums. Last year, the ministries concerned, in cooperation with the Asian Disaster Reduction Center, launched a project to educate school children in the tsunami-prone area on how to observe and respond to such a disaster. It is crucial to prepare our next generation and to make them aware of and resilient to the increasing multiple hazards that the Earth currently faces. Besides that programme, Thailand also promotes the involvement of local communities and civil society in disaster risk reduction activities through various initiatives — such as the Mr. Disaster Warning programme, community-based disaster risk management and the civil defence volunteers programme. Thailand would be pleased to cooperate and share with other countries its experiences in this area.

Finally, I would like to express our thanks for the work of United Nations organizations involved in humanitarian assistance, as well as donor countries and organizations for their financial and technical support. Humanitarian assistance still requires a great deal of resources, technology and manpower. We believe that all platforms emerging from United Nations initiatives and coordination will lead us to more frequent and fruitful exchanges of good practices and further promote our cooperation in disaster management and humanitarian assistance.

Mr. Skinner-Klée (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin by expressing our resolute solidarity with the victims of the most recent natural disasters, notably those that occurred in Bangladesh and Chile last week. The challenges resulting from various events of this year prompt us to speak out today to share some ideas related to our own experience in Guatemala that we believe are important. Before offering some specific observations, however, I too would like to thank the Secretary-General for his thorough and detailed reports, as well as for the recommendations they contain, which serve as the basis for our deliberations.

Thirty-one years ago, my country was taken by surprise and pummelled by one of the most devastating earthquakes in our history, which measured 7.5 on the Richter scale and left more than 23,000 people dead, 76,000 injured and at least 4 million otherwise affected. The scenario is different today, however. We have developed policies, contingency plans and a genuine institutional structure to address the consequences of similar disasters. That represents significant progress with regard to disaster prevention and mitigation. Although the risk of earthquakes persists in various parts of the world — on a scale similar to or greater than in Guatemala — the number of victims and the economic losses are lower today. That can be explained by the fact that assistance today is more reliable as a result of improved capacity to respond, as well as because of a faster response time in providing funding quickly on the basis of better understanding of actual needs and vulnerabilities. As a result, we are moving towards a system that, while not perfect, is certainly better prepared, genuinely capable of helping people in need and more likely to be able to be a part of efforts of States.

It is for that reason that we appreciate efforts to strengthen the coordination of humanitarian assistance

in humanitarian emergencies and disasters on the part of the United Nations system, in particular the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, which has certainly had a very intense year, but one replete with significant achievements.

My Government recognizes the value of the Secretary-General's recommendations contained in his reports on strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance. Many of them are already being implemented in Guatemala through the office of The National Disaster Reduction Coordinator, and regionally throughout Central America by the Coordination Centre for the Prevention of Natural Disasters in Central America.

It is also worth recalling that, in May 2007, Guatemala published a new version of the manual of its Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Centre. The effort to update the manual began with a review of the text and an assessment of our experience during Hurricane Stan in 2005. The main goal of the manual is to guide decision-making and information management in order to coordinate assistance and train all those involved in providing it during a humanitarian crisis.

Addressing humanitarian emergencies must begin with risk reduction and preventive efforts aimed at vulnerable populations. To that end, special attention should also be paid to the issue of gender-based violence committed during humanitarian emergencies. We must also pay close attention to our cultural characteristics and specificities. The age-old community-based traditions of indigenous peoples are crucial to the success of the humanitarian crisis management system as well as to the success of post-crisis recovery, including repairing the social fabric.

That leads me to underscore the crucial importance — once again emphasized by the Secretary-General in his report — of providing humanitarian access. It should be noted that humanitarian access depends as much on the degree of development of local capacities as on personal relationships on the ground. With regard to local capacities, we must bear in mind the lack of infrastructure in some countries, especially with regard to roads in certain regions, which complicates access and creates obstacles to reaching vulnerable populations. We must also remember that access is not an end in itself; it is a tool in ensuring timely humanitarian assistance to the ultimate beneficiaries.

Turning to the issue of financing the rapid response capacity of the United Nations system, we believe that important components are now in place, including the predictability of financing for humanitarian emergencies through the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF). We note that CERF has met many of its goals since its inception. Nevertheless, we must continue to maximize available resources, since such disasters, given their greater frequency and intensity, deplete available resources and reduce response capacity. We must also continue to strive to streamline procedures, increase training, harmonize reporting formats and improve accountability mechanisms.

Finally, we recognize that today more than ever, as the Secretary-General notes in his report, strengthening the coordination and effective planning of humanitarian assistance requires a genuine commitment to cooperation among the various partners participating in the provision of humanitarian assistance. We therefore believe it important that we hold a dialogue on the role and complementarity of humanitarian, political and peacekeeping actors.

This year in particular, we are pleased to note the first meeting of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in Geneva. It has given us a political forum for discussing the reduction of disaster risk in all sectors and has made it easier to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, particularly as regards poverty reduction and environmental sustainability. Furthermore, we are gratified to participate in the Latin American efforts to evaluate the possibility of establishing a simplified system to respond to emergencies and contingencies arising from natural disasters, bearing in mind our countries' vulnerability to the consequences of climate change. We should also note the valuable momentum imparted to the organization of volunteers who contribute to developing participatory social policies and to mitigating damage caused by natural disasters, taking account of the regional network of humanitarian volunteers created through the White Helmets Initiative as one of the tools of its formation.

That is why the convening of this debate and the adoption of resolutions on this issue contribute to blazing trails for multilateral cooperation, which we believe to be the most appropriate and time-tested way to respond to the current and future challenges to humanitarian assistance.

Mr. Sorcar (Bangladesh): I am taking the floor today against the backdrop of a severe tropical cyclone that has caused extensive damage in my country. The disaster befell Bangladesh before it could recover from two rounds of massive flooding that inundated almost half the country just three months ago.

I would like to record our deep appreciation to the President of the General Assembly and to the representatives who have conveyed their sympathies and assurances of support, in writing or in words, in the hour of difficulty of our nation. We have forwarded their kind words to our capital, which no doubt will be a source of strength and encouragement for our leadership and our people.

The cyclone, named Sidr, hit Bangladesh, particularly its south-western districts, on late Thursday, 15 November, with the severity of a full blown category-four hurricane. It produced winds of up to 150 miles per hour at landfall. Tropical cyclones are no strangers to Bangladesh. Every year, the courageous people brace for storms, but this time even we were overwhelmed by its force and the extent of the damage it caused. It was one of the top 10 fiercest cyclones in the recorded history of the past 137 years. The extent of devastation has been huge. The official estimate of the death toll has risen to 2,048 and is going up by the hour. Many are injured and quite a few are missing. All indications point to the sad possibility that the final number will be higher than what has been possible to confirm officially.

Even in difficult times we brace ourselves in hope. Many people died, but it could have been higher — much higher. In 1991, for instance, when a cyclone of similar magnitude hit Bangladesh, more than 140,000 people perished. Although we are nowhere near the final death count, this time it seems that the extensive preparation of the Government, along with other agencies that worked together, was successful in averting a larger death toll.

Cyclone Sidr originated in a depression in the Bay of Bengal. It had a radius of 300 miles and an eye of 50 miles across. In the 48 hours before the landfall of the cyclone, about 3.2 million people were evacuated to designated shelters and other safe places. That by itself was an enormous feat, as mass evacuation of densely populated coastal areas with poor communications is a huge challenge. However, extensive preparedness and timely action, which have been unreservedly appreciated by many, was instrumental in avoiding a bigger catastrophe.

In addition to the large number of deaths, the cyclone demolished houses, destroyed standing crops, felled trees and damaged shrimp farms — a chief source of livelihoods in the coastal areas. The mangrove forests of the Sudarbans, a World Heritage Site and a natural habitat of the famed royal bengal tiger, have been extensively damaged. Many of the wild animals are obviously in the same danger as people.

The complete damage assessment is still being awaited, though preliminary indications are that 27 million people have been affected by the severe storm. The Government is now focusing on emergency needs: supply of non-food items, food, nutrition, water and sanitation, shelter and disease surveillance. Members of the Defence Forces have been deployed and are working round the clock in rescue and other operations and immediate relief activities. Air Force helicopters have been flying sorties with relief supplies to offshore islands and other inaccessible areas for the past three days. The Navy is also fully involved in relief operations. Cash, food grains and other supplies are being allocated by the Government for assistance. The longer-term perspective calls for the rehabilitation of livelihoods, infrastructure, health, educational and other services and increased shelter capacity.

The severe destruction and human death toll have prompted sympathy and assistance from many countries. Many of our friends have come forward with support; the international response has been great. The United Nations country team, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and many non-governmental organizations have provided support to the Government through extensive emergency response precautions, including mobilizing in-country staff and prepositioned relief stocks across southern Bangladesh.

Many development partners, including the European Union, China, France, Germany, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States, to name a few, have made early pledges of assistance. We are receiving commitments from others countries, which are standing by the affected population of Bangladesh in its struggle. We are thankful to all countries, organizations and entities

that have stepped forward with assurance, material and moral, in our time of great difficulty.

We received a statement issued today by the spokesperson of the Foreign Ministry, which says that

> "While the resilient people of Bangladesh and the Government are making all efforts to cope with the adversities, at this time we will welcome support from the international community, as before, through the Government, to help mitigate the effects of the disaster."

Time will not permit me to dwell too long on the reports of the Secretary-General. I would, however, like to add a few words concerning the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF). From its establishment in March 2006, it has been a mainstay of emergency response. According to the report of the Secretary-General (A/62/72), the Emergency Relief Coordinator committed $259.3 million to 331 life-saving humanitarian projects in 35 countries in the year 2006 alone. The Fund was also utilized in response to sudden-onset disasters and crises in 24 countries, with 59 per cent of funding going to rapid response to crises in Africa.

We believe the mechanism deserves to be strengthened, as it is the mainstay in many emergency situations. In the short span of time since its launch in 2006, the upgraded CERF has proven its usefulness in many parts of the world, including my own country. We hope that the Fund will continue to receive strong support from Member States, in terms of long-term political support and increased resource flow.

Mrs. Aitimova (Kazakhstan): It is understandable that I should want to express our solidarity and sympathy with the people of Bangladesh on the recent natural disaster, which caused human and economic losses.

At the outset, I would like to pay tribute to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations (A/62/87), which covers multifaceted activities of all United Nations institutions in that field. As the report indicates, the further aggravation of existing emergencies and the increase in the incidence and severity of disasters caused by natural hazards confirm the need to remain focused on strengthening the capacity of humanitarian actors to address the effects of emergencies on the lives and livelihoods of millions of people.

We believe that strengthening cooperation in responding to natural disasters and destruction under the umbrella of the United Nations in accordance with the Hyogo Declaration and Framework for Action 2005-2015 and related General Assembly resolutions, should remain one of the Organization's priority tasks.

Kazakhstan welcomes the positive results of the Central Emergency Response Fund's work during the past year with respect to voluntary contributions by States Members of the United Nations as well as equitable, timely and efficient distribution of these funds.

We believe it is important to increase the coordination and cooperation among United Nations bodies, other international organizations and Governments on the national level, in order to prevent and overcome the consequences of natural disasters for the sake of saving many people's lives. In this regard, we attach particular importance to the establishment by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) of a Central Asian disaster response coordination centre in Kazakhstan. As a further step in strengthening the standby capacities of the United Nations in the region, we propose to establish in Kazakhstan a network of warehouses for the Central Asia region to make relief assets readily available for deployment.

Establishing partnerships, creating capacities within national and local governments, regional organizations and civil society groups, and better defining needs are critical investments in addressing humanitarian vulnerability more effectively in the coming years.

For Kazakhstan, whose territory has been hit by numerous man-made and ecological disasters, such as the dying Aral Sea and the former Semipalatinsk nuclear testing site, solving those problems is an absolute priority. The humanitarian, social and economic consequences of those disasters continue to affect the process of sustainable development not only for Kazakhstan but for the Central Asian region as a whole.

The seriousness of the situation around the Aral Sea highlights the need to take specific steps at the international level to solve the problem. By the 1990s,

the Aral Sea, once a large internal sea, had lost three fourths of its water. That has spelled disaster for millions of people living around it. The salt from the exposed seabed is being sprinkled over the entire Eurasian continent, damaging its environment.

The countries of the Central Asian region have done a lot to rehabilitate the Sea. However, without consolidation of the efforts of the world community, this problem cannot be solved. In this regard, we propose giving the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea the status of a United Nations institution, and we call for an international partnership to develop and adopt a package of measures related to the provision of financial, technical and humanitarian assistance by the United Nations, its specialized agencies and programmes as well as by multilateral financial institutions, in order to rehabilitate the Aral Sea.

This year, the international community marks the twenty-first anniversary of the tragic accident at Chernobyl, the symbol of a catastrophe on the planetary scale. The consequences of nuclear radiation are truly tragic. Millions of people in Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine have been affected by nuclear contamination. This pollution has also affected other countries in Europe. The effects of the radiation fallout continue to have a negative impact on the environment on an even broader geographical scale.

We in Kazakhstan are firmly convinced that the Chernobyl issue should not be considered to be the exclusive problem of those countries that were directly affected by the accident. At that time, my country, like many others, belonged to one country, and many people from the former republics of the Soviet Union — including 30,000 from Kazakhstan — took part in the rescue operation. Many of them lost their lives. Many of them still suffer from the consequences of radiation. The Government of Kazakhstan is taking measures to assist those people who participated in the rescue operations in Chernobyl and has quadrupled the special monthly State allowances for that category of persons.

But much remains to be done. The Chernobyl catastrophe is a global challenge and it should receive a global response. Kazakhstan commends the efforts of the United Nations over the years to eliminate the effects of the Chernobyl disaster in Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine. The international community has provided the affected countries with substantial assistance, although it remains inadequate to their real needs. There must therefore be joint, coordinated efforts on a broad scale to provide assistance for the rehabilitation of the affected populations and for mitigating the environmental, economic and social consequences of the disaster.

Twenty-one years after that tragic day, the Chernobyl catastrophe remains a serious problem for the entire international community. We are convinced that only by combining our efforts and capacities can we eliminate the terrible consequences of the accident and provide a better future for the millions who have suffered its effects. We hope that today's discussion will help mobilize sustained assistance by the international community to the affected people of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine.

Mr. Heller (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like my first words to convey the appreciation of the Government of Mexico to the international community for the expressions of solidarity and support that we have received regarding the recent flooding in the states of Tabasco and Chiapas in the south of the country, which have over the past few weeks affected more than a million people.

Governments as well as public and private international institutions have supported the intensive efforts of the Government of President Felipe Calderón, and those of local authorities and civil society as a whole, to help our affected compatriots. We have made progress in addressing the urgent needs of the affected population and in identifying the financial and technical resources we need to adopt appropriate measures.

Unfortunately, the emergency is not yet over and we are beginning to see the consequences of one of the worst climate-related disasters that our country has experienced. The economic and social impact on the affected areas will continue to be felt indefinitely. It is calculated that some 350,000 people have lost everything and are now in a situation of extreme vulnerability. On top of that, they face multiple challenges regarding health, housing, food and infrastructure. Thus, given the magnitude of the disaster, we must rely on the support of the international community to complement the actions taken by our Government.

As a country that has been buffeted by natural disasters on numerous occasions, Mexico deeply

appreciates the disaster response work of the United Nations, in particular that of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in channelling humanitarian assistance. Responding to Mexico's appeal, the United Nations system sent a United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination Team from OCHA, whose role it is to support a response, in contact with federal and local authorities, international organizations and civil society. The various agencies in the system are already moving emergency resources for humanitarian assistance and, along with our Secretariat of Foreign Affairs, coordinating international aid to the affected areas.

My delegation reiterates its firm commitment to efforts by the international community to reduce the risk of natural disasters and considers that, given the correlation between these and sustainable development, it is of fundamental importance to strengthen preventive strategies. We express our solidarity with those countries that are currently facing similar dire circumstances, such as Haiti, the Dominican Republic and most recently Bangladesh; we are saddened by the tragedy there.

In spite of technological and scientific progress in the detection and prevention of natural hazards, we must continue to work intensively to identify and mitigate risks as well as the increase the preparedness of society, giving priority to the most vulnerable sectors. No single plan will completely address the effects of such phenomena, but it is possible to intensify, consolidate and continue to develop prevention mechanisms, including the development and ingraining of a culture of self-protection.

For that purpose, we deem it essential to strengthen coordination among Governments, civil society and international humanitarian and development agencies. We also believe that the United Nations has a central role to play in the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action, which needs to be strengthened through concrete measures in order to ensure coherence among programmes carried out by the various United Nations entities and in order to optimize the allocation of available resources.

On numerous occasions, Mexico has stressed the importance of strengthening multilateral mechanisms that respond to humanitarian emergencies in order to make them more effective and expeditious in offering assistance to the victims of these phenomena. The creation of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) has been, without a doubt, one of the most significant steps taken in that regard. We are pleased to see that, less than two years after its launch, results have met expectations. Mexico is a founding contributor to CERF, and this year it renewed its contribution, thus confirming its commitment to a more transparent and effective humanitarian system, focused on the needs in the field, including those emergency situations that lack visibility.

Concerning the emergency situation in Tabasco and Chiapas, I would like to inform the Assembly that the relevant authorities of the Government of Mexico have accepted the programme of activities to be undertaken with resources from the Fund to support the design of projects related to health, water and sanitation, as well as to coordination, evaluation, planning, monitoring, shelter and logistic coordination. In this respect, consultations regarding the modalities of implementation are under way with CERF.

Along a different line of thought, we consider that the international community's efforts to improve the efficiency and coordination of humanitarian assistance will continue to be limited as long as there is resistance to guaranteeing humanitarian workers security and access to populations in need, particularly in cases where States lack the capacity to offer protection. The issue of access is a cornerstone of resolution 46/182 and a sine qua non for a solid multilateral humanitarian system capable of alleviating the suffering of the millions of persons around the world who, directly or indirectly, face the consequences of humanitarian crises.

Unfortunately, civilians are recurrent targets of warfare. The violence they suffer takes the form of terrible phenomena such as kidnappings, child exploitation and violence and sexual abuse against women and girls. Hence, we have the moral obligation to implement concrete measures to enable the Organization to alleviate these sufferings. Mexico is therefore concerned by the fact that the issue of access to civilians in armed conflicts is being interpreted as a question of interference without considering that this is a fundamental human right of the victims and an obligation, under international law, of all parties.

The protection of human beings affected by humanitarian emergencies, whether they be natural disasters or more complex emergencies, should not be

a controversial issue and should always constitute a common objective towards which Governments and international organizations work together side by side.

Mr. Nsengimana (Rwanda): On behalf of my delegation and on my own account, I want to express deep condolences to the Government and the people of Bangladesh at this very difficult moment.

We welcome the Secretary-General's report on humanitarian assistance and rehabilitation for selected countries and regions, contained in document A/62/310. The Rwanda delegation will focus its statement on assistance to survivors of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, particularly orphans, widows and victims of sexual violence.

The tragic events that occurred in Rwanda in 1994 are among the darkest and most dreadful in human history. Over 1 million lives were lost, and tens of thousands suffered horrific physical and psychological abuse and trauma. Over 300,000 children were orphaned, tens of thousands of women were widowed and thousands contracted HIV/AIDS as a result of rape.

Regrettably, the international community did not take timely and decisive action to prevent the tragic events from unfolding or to stop them when they had started. My delegation's understanding is that the international community's responsibility to protect populations from genocide entails a responsibility to prevent genocide from occurring, a responsibility to protect if prevention fails, and a responsibility to rebuild if protection fails. The agenda sub-item before us enables the United Nations system and the wider international community to exercise their responsibility to rebuild Rwanda after the genocide.

My delegation welcomes the recognition in the Secretary-General's report of the progress that has been made in rebuilding Rwanda after the genocide. The Rwandan people have, for the most part, decided to put their painful history behind them and to rebuild their country on a solid foundation based on reconciliation, justice, good governance, development, human rights and democracy. We commend the international community and the United Nations system for their support for Rwanda over the years.

As the Secretary-General's report correctly points out, significant challenges remain, particularly among vulnerable groups such as orphans and widows. There is a need for continued support to those vulnerable groups of people, particularly in terms of assistance in shelter, health care and education for orphans; medical care and treatment for victims of sexual violence, including HIV-positive victims; trauma and psychological counselling and skills training; and microcredit programmes aimed at promoting self-sufficiency and alleviating poverty among the vulnerable groups.

We wish to commend the Department of Public Information for its work on Rwanda genocide victim remembrance and education, conducted in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/225. A successful exhibit took place at United Nations Headquarters in April this year to mark the thirteenth commemoration of the Rwanda genocide and was opened by the Secretary-General. Similar activities took place in several other cities around the world.

There is a need for that programme to be continued into the next biennium. The challenges facing the world today — rising xenophobia, racism and ethnic and religious tensions — require that the lessons of the Rwanda genocide be widely taught and disseminated among all people, particularly the young. We therefore call upon all delegations to support the extension of the programme for the biennium 2008-2009.

Finally, I would like to draw the attention of Member States to the decision of the Security Council to begin completing the work of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in 2008, in accordance with its Completion Strategy. While we commend the Tribunal for the work it has conducted so far, we should recall that there is still a lot left to be done, including the completion of many trials. There are also residual issues relating to genocide survivors, in particular witness and victim support and protection, capacity-building for the Rwandan judiciary, and the transfer of Court documents and records to Rwanda to contribute to genocide victim remembrance and education. Those issues are inextricably linked to the agenda sub-item under discussion, so we look forward to the support of delegations in addressing those issues in the context of a resolution on the sub-item.

Mr. Oosthuizen (South Africa): First of all, let me, like other representatives, express South Africa's deepest sympathy to Bangladesh, which was subject to serious humanitarian disasters recently.

My delegation would like to express its appreciation for the reports of the Secretary-General provided under item 71, which offer a useful analysis of the challenges still facing the international humanitarian community and provide some recommendations to be considered by the General Assembly for our deliberations on this matter.

At the outset, we would like to thank the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and particularly its Under-Secretary-General, Mr. John Holmes, for the work done to strengthen the coordination of humanitarian assistance in the United Nations, sometimes in extremely difficult situations.

Effective humanitarian coordination is of utmost importance if we want to succeed in assisting the vulnerable. The increasing number of organizations, each with their varying skills and priorities involved in the important task of providing humanitarian assistance, further highlights the need to ensure that all those efforts are provided in an effective and coordinated manner in order to prevent duplication and a waste of resources. We therefore look forward to a further evaluation of the impact and possible success of the cluster approach as one of the measures to provide better leadership and to prevent gaps in providing humanitarian assistance.

The Secretary-General also rightly alludes to the critical role of partnerships and international cooperation in providing assistance during complex humanitarian emergencies. Those partnerships, under the leadership of national Governments, could also include the engagement of regional organizations to help improve humanitarian responses and standby capacities.

We also have to acknowledge that, due to the increase in the scope and severity of the impact of some humanitarian emergencies, many developing countries do not always have the capacity to deal with disaster preparedness, risk reduction and the impact of those emergencies. My delegation would therefore again call on the United Nations humanitarian system to continue not only to assist Member States in their efforts to improve their local and national capacities, but also to assist regional organizations, in order to assure a regional response where emergencies transcends national borders. That would assist Member States in making optimal use of resources in preparing and responding to emergencies, as well as in supporting the resilience of societies in post-emergency situations.

South Africa, as host to one of OCHA's regional offices, is aware of the important work the Office is doing in the region to assist countries facing the challenges of droughts, floods and food insecurity. Continued financial support to the Regional Office for Southern Africa would enable it to improve its support to countries in Southern Africa and to fulfil its mandate.

The report of the Secretary-General further highlights that, despite the many international instruments emphasizing the importance of building capacity to respond to disasters, such capacity remains constrained, mainly due to a lack of funding. Improved financial support is not limited to capacity-building for national Governments, but also extends to the United Nations humanitarian system. South Africa proudly supports the Central Emergency Relieve Fund (CERF) and will continue to do so. At the same time, it eagerly looks forward to the report of the Secretary-General, envisioned for 2008, to measure the successes and challenges facing CERF.

South Africa also recognizes the important role that all parties in complex humanitarian emergencies should play in ensuring the safe access of humanitarian personnel when providing assistance to vulnerable communities, bearing in mind the need for the humanitarian community to respect the culture, traditions and practices of the countries in which they operate. Furthermore, my delegation remains convinced of the need to protect civilians during complex humanitarian emergencies, and also calls on all role-players to address gender-based violence and to make all possible efforts to ensure that adequate measures are put into place to prevent, promptly investigate and persecute acts of gender-based violence.

It is essential, however, to remember that humanitarian assistance should be provided on the basis of the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, as enshrined in General Assembly resolution 46/182 and other General Assembly resolutions.

The report contained in document A/62/82, entitled "Assistance to the Palestinian People" contains a description of efforts made by United Nations

agencies, in cooperation with Palestinian and donor counterparts, to support the Palestinian civilian population and institutions. We commend the work of the United Nations in that regard and would like to urge the international donor community to continue its generous support. We need to prevent a further deterioration in the quality of life inside the occupied Palestinian territories and a decline of the Palestinian economy, which could only lead to an increase in the economic, social and humanitarian needs of the Palestinian population. In that, regard we need to stress that the crossing points must remain open in order to allow the Palestinian people to receive food, medicines and other important items, especially fuel. It is important that humanitarian assistance be delivered to prevent further suffering and to allow the Palestinian people to live and work in dignity.

The report contained in document A/62/310 highlights the current challenges to the delivery of both humanitarian and relief and rehabilitation assistance by the United Nations and its partners to countries affected by various types of emergencies, particularly in Africa. South Africa would like to encourage the United Nations system, in close cooperation with the respective national Governments, not only properly to identify the specific needs to address the challenges those countries face, but also to provide the appropriate means to implement proposals that will help those countries reach their development goals. It is evident from the report that, in many instances, Governments have taken responsibility in identifying challenges, but that international support, in its various forms, is needed to assist Governments to help alleviate the plight of the vulnerable in their respective countries. We should accept that responsibility.

We are also aware that, after the period of immediate emergency relief has passed, there is often a bigger and more arduous task ahead: to rebuild and bring normalcy back to the affected populations. We therefore appreciate the Secretary-General's report entitled "International cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development" and would like to highlight the critical element of continued involvement of all relevant role-players in the early recovery phase, with the aim of creating favourable conditions for sustainable development. The importance of finding lasting solutions to wars and conflicts would also clearly contribute to the sustainable development of countries. We further call upon relevant humanitarian and development actors to strengthen tools and mechanisms to ensure that early recovery needs are considered as part of the planning and implementation of humanitarian response activities. The importance of sufficient funding to help affected communities in their recovery efforts also remains critical.

In conclusion, South Africa remains firm in its unwavering commitment to improve the working of the humanitarian system in an effort to provide better assistance faster, in a more coordinated and predictable manner, and based on the principle of partnerships. It is our hope the international community will continue to provide assistance in a manner that will take the needs of the affected communities into consideration, and not only based on financial considerations.

Mr. Rees (United States of America): The United States continues to support a stronger and more effective international response to humanitarian crises. Over the past two years, we have been proud to help approximately 1 million African refugees to return home, thanks in large part to collective activism, democratic action and financial assistance. The United States is also working actively with other Governments to resolve the protracted situation of refugees, such as the Bhutanese in Nepal. In particular, we have responded to the joint Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees-UNICEF appeal for the education of Iraqi children in Jordan and Syria with $39 million to date, and we have made almost $200 million available in 2007 to assist displaced Iraqis.

The United States is conducting active humanitarian diplomacy critical to improving conditions for beneficiaries of assistance around the world — in Africa, the Middle East, the Americas, Asia and Europe. We recognize the importance of preparedness for all types of disasters, we believe in accountability and quality in humanitarian assistance, and we emphasize that international assistance must support and strengthen national and community capacities, rather than undermine or override them.

We have again seen a year of activity and change — change that we hope will prove to represent progress — in the realm of humanitarian reform. Examples include the application and strengthening of the cluster approach to respond to the needs of the internally displaced, the humanitarian coordinator

system, and the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF).

The United States continues to see progress in the use of the cluster approach and the consolidation of support among donors, implementing agencies and affected States. Clarity of responsibility through the assignment of coordination roles for humanitarian activity has strengthened overall United Nations leadership and responsiveness in humanitarian crises. We continue to stress the importance of the participation of non-governmental organizations at all levels of coordination, including the cluster approach.

In its first full year of activity, the Central Emergency Response Fund has proved to be an effective tool for rapid response to humanitarian emergencies and has provided critical early funding for United Nations operational engagement in emerging crises. It also continues to provide a valuable access point for the participation of new donors in global humanitarian operations. While we continue to assess CERF's value in addressing "under-funded emergencies", we remain open to discussion and development of clearer definitions and criteria to govern disbursements in those situations.

Unfortunately, protracted civil conflicts continue to create some of the worst situations of forced displacement in our era. Renewed displacement in the eastern Congo and in the Sudan's Darfur province are tragic reminders that civilians are at times deliberately targeted by some of the belligerent parties in a conflict. Despite improved systemic responsiveness to internally displaced persons, access remains a key issue. Humanitarian agencies cannot assist people they cannot reach.

The safety and security of humanitarian workers, like those of the civilians they seek to assist, is often jeopardized, at times deliberately, by some belligerents. As the United States delegation has stated previously, without full and unhindered access for humanitarian actors, even the most robust response effort will fail to meet emergency needs. Deliberate attacks on humanitarian workers remain a significant impediment to life-saving aid in many crises, and we must all work together to guarantee the safety and security of relief workers, as well as of civilians.

I want to reaffirm the strong support of the United States for neutral, impartial, independent and robust responses to humanitarian needs around the globe. To that end, we look forward to working with Sweden as co-chairs of the Good Humanitarian Donorship programme and to working with other States on strengthening needs-based assessment, improving coordination at the central and field levels, and reviewing best practices and performance measurement. We would welcome other donor Governments, including new or emerging donors, to join the initiative and incorporate its principles and best practices into their policies as well.

In conclusion, the United States would like to join others in expressing our deep sympathy to the people of Bangladesh for the loss of life and the damage caused by the recent cyclone. That disaster and other humanitarian emergencies present grave challenges, but they also bring to mind the collective strength of what we like to call our "international community".

We must measure the effectiveness of our efforts in providing humanitarian aid not by how many statements or plans we make — not even by how many dollars we spend — but by how many lives we save and by how many people, their lives devastated by unspeakable natural or man-made disasters, have had their suffering alleviated and their burdens lightened. By uniting in the face of dramatic adversity, as the international community did following the 2004 tsunami and in response to the earthquake in Pakistan, we can save lives and help the afflicted. We hope the United Nations, and particularly the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, will continue to play a central role in galvanizing this cooperative response.

Mr. Tharyat (Indonesia): Let me begin by expressing, on behalf of the people and the Government of Indonesia to the people and Government of Bangladesh, our deepest sympathy and solidarity with respect to the recent disaster that hit the country.

I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive and detailed reports, particularly that on strengthening emergency relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction, recovery and prevention in the aftermath of the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster, as contained in document A/62/83.

As one of the victims of the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster, Indonesia is highly appreciative of and deeply encouraged by the continued attention of

the United Nations and the international community to that issue. We join other delegations in expressing appreciation for the efforts undertaken by Governments, international organizations, civil society and the private sector in providing support in humanitarian and disaster relief, and in assisting countries to make the transition from relief to development.

Nowadays, rarely do we see a month go by without a major disaster reported in the public media. The increased incidence of disasters, as reported in the Secretary-General's report in document A/62/323, suggests that the frequency and intensity will likely continue into the future. That creates a major challenge, particularly for developing countries, in pursuing national and international development objectives.

While natural hazards do not discriminate, it is important to recall that the poor are the most vulnerable and often endure the greatest cost. In effect, as the report rightly emphasizes, disasters contribute to vulnerability and persistent poverty, which later undermine efforts in development and the achievement of the international development goals. The carnage of the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster three years ago profoundly demonstrates the high vulnerability of poor communities to natural disasters. It also underlines the importance of paying serious attention not only to emergency relief, but also to the disaster risk reduction required as part of development efforts.

Viewed in that context, while countries affected by the tsunami disaster, including Indonesia, on the whole have made progress in their reconstruction efforts, it will still take many more years to attend to disaster risks to affected communities. Furthermore, alongside the ongoing efforts to rebuild and recover from the tsunami, the main mission now is to rebuild better. The survivors of the disaster not only expect the recovery efforts not simply to restore communities to their pre-tsunami conditions, but they also desire greater capacity to be established and to be prepared for future calamities.

Let me also add that, as part of the reconstruction efforts, it is important that the valuable lessons learned be shared as much as possible. In our experience during the tsunami and the reconstruction of the affected areas, one of the main lessons learned was the importance of close coordination on the ground, from the emergency phase to the present phase of rehabilitation and reconstruction.

The tsunami-affected countries, although facing different recovery timetables, still share the common challenge of long-term recovery. In that connection, I would like to emphasize the following.

First, while tsunami affected countries have progressed in rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts, the support of the international community, donor countries and financial institutions, as well as the private sector and civil society, is still very crucial in the medium- and long-term. Secondly, continuing the objective of rebuilding better is essential to the affected communities, particularly in improving the quality of and strengthening local capacity in disaster management. Thirdly, prevention efforts through tsunami early warning arrangements in the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia should be continually evaluated and strengthened.

In the light of those considerations, Indonesia will introduce a draft resolution entitled "Strengthening emergency relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and prevention in the aftermath of the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster". The proposed text follows from previous resolutions on this issue, and hence seeks the generous support and sponsorship of Member States.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to all the delegations that actively took part in the negotiations on the past resolution, as well as to the representatives of the Secretariat for their valuable advice. We look forward to the Assembly's continued support.

Ms. Blum (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Permit me at the outset to express, on behalf of the Government of Colombia, our deepest sympathy and solidarity with the Government and the people of Bangladesh on the loss of life and suffering caused by the cyclone that recently struck that country.

My delegation takes note of the reports submitted by the Secretary-General at the sixty-second session on humanitarian assistance of the United Nations.

Colombia welcomes the important humanitarian role played by United Nations agencies, funds and programmes in various regions of the world. My delegation encourages the system to continue to strengthen that mission, with full respect for the guiding principles of humanitarian assistance. In

particular, we must uphold the neutral and impartial nature of humanitarianism and respect the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as the primary role that the State must play in organizing, coordinating and implementing the provision of humanitarian assistance on its territory. We must bear in mind that it is primarily up to States to exercise leadership in this area. My delegation notes with satisfaction that the reports refer to the importance of improving relationships with national authorities and of strengthening local capacities. Such references are found in analysis concerning disaster situations and the coordination of humanitarian assistance.

It is important that humanitarian entities — in particular the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and its subsidiary entities — increasingly highlight the role of affected States in this area. If we are to find lasting and effective solutions to humanitarian situations, it is important not only that we strengthen inter-agency coordination, but also, and in particular, that we ensure their coordination with Government entities. Thus, humanitarian cooperation can be tailored to the structures, plans and programmes of beneficiary States, providing coordinated assistance and better responses and achieving effective coverage without duplication of efforts.

This also applies to the cluster approach. In that context, the Secretary-General indicates the need to enhance support for national and local authorities and structures in the humanitarian field. Colombia wishes to reiterate that, while this approach is the subject of intergovernmental analysis within the United Nations, together with other issues of reform and system-wide coherence, its implementation should be promoted only when States themselves request and authorize such implementation.

We must also improve information systems in order to achieve more effective results in this area. With regard to needs assessment, coordination with Governments is also important, for two main reasons. First, it helps States to develop their own needs-assessment systems, which they need so that they can define their own programmes and develop a sense of ownership of their activities. Secondly, when national institutions have reliable and developed information systems, their assessments should serve as a basis for determining existing needs and the most appropriate assistance activities for each context.

Humanitarian assistance should contribute to the design and implementation of processes that enable us to repair the social fabric of affected populations and to assist in the development of economic structures that guarantee sustainability once the critical difficulties have been overcome. Humanitarian assistance should also be based on State coordination.

Colombia has programmes that assist disaster victims and provide comprehensive support to persons displaced by situations of violence. Those programmes incorporate the relevant international standards and include the components of prevention, early warning, emergency humanitarian assistance, access to State social services and programmes and support for social and economic stabilization.

The assistance plan for persons displaced by situations of violence contains an additional important component: protection for human rights and voluntary returns. The plan is implemented in a decentralized manner and includes a beneficiary registration system that has gradually been improved to correct identified shortcomings. The 2007-2010 budget for the plan's implementation totals approximately $500 million per year. Additionally, in the context of demobilizing illegal armed groups, we are promoting a strategy aimed at compensating victims, which is essential to rebuild the lives of displaced persons.

Because emergencies can exceed the capacity to act, Colombia complements its efforts with international cooperation activities. Various agencies of the United Nations system, other Governments, the International Committee of the Red Cross and various cooperation entities contribute to the implementation and improvement of national policies and work with State institutions on humanitarian fronts. In such work, it is important to ensure that there is always synergy, consistency with national plans and coordination with the activities of national and local authorities on the ground.

In conclusion, I reiterate Colombia's position that it is important to strengthen strategies that facilitate the transition from emergency assistance to development. At every stage of the process, humanitarian assistance — in the sense of emergency aid — must be considered temporary, and must place priority on measures that go beyond relief and lead to lasting solutions. That objective can be attained only with support by the system's agencies for the creation and

strengthening of local capacities, which in turn must be based on full respect by all for the norms, programmes and needs of the beneficiary State.

Mr. Olhaye (Djibouti): At the outset, we wish to express our sincere sympathy to the people of Bangladesh, who are struggling to cope with one of the worst cyclones in a decade. Already, more than 2,000 people are dead, but the true scale of disaster is such that it is feared that thousands more may have perished. In the midst of this calamity, we should not lose sight of the effectiveness of the Government's early warning system, which enabled a vast number of people — more than a million coastal dwellers, at the least — to flee to shelter. The Government's response system was also extremely effective and immediate. We have a lot to learn from Bangladesh.

I wish to express the gratitude of my delegation to the Secretary-General for his reports for this meeting. Equally, we wish to express our appreciation to Ambassador John Holmes for his assertiveness, his passionate commitment and his enlightened leadership in guiding the work of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Whatever the reason, whatever the cause, natural disasters are on the rise, and the direct consequence of that has been an exposure to greater levels of loss of life and property and material damage. Unfortunately, our world has not been short of armed conflicts, particularly in Africa, which continue to force the displacement of millions of people into suffering and insecurity. Quite often, they are denied access to humanitarian aid. In all of these cases, OCHA is at the forefront of efforts to galvanize acutely needed assistance and to plan coordination and strategy during complex emergencies.

Growing numbers of people around the world are increasingly exposed and vulnerable, both to natural disasters and to complex emergencies. None of these adversities confine their destructive qualities to single countries or regions. As the report of the Secretary-General notes,

> "The spread of humanitarian emergencies across international borders is a common phenomenon, prompting humanitarian consequences on a regional scale ... .
>
> "Natural disasters often affect multiple countries simultaneously ... .
>
> "These are telling examples of how the spillover effects of individual conflicts and disasters deepen humanitarian problems and further complicate the delivery of assistance." (A/62/87, paras. 18, 19 and 20)

These developments strengthen the realization that we all inhabit this earth together; while today's catastrophe may not affect you, there is no guarantee what tomorrow's will bring.

My country's economic and social development efforts have been constrained by insufficient water supply; extreme climatic conditions, particularly endemic aridity; severe droughts; and occasional flash floods. Djibouti is deeply concerned over these developments and wonders if they are the initial opening events of the predicted global warming effects in sub-Saharan Africa. As the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warned, the most pronounced consequences of the worsening global climate change will be felt in Africa. Already, we in Africa are witnessing spreading shortages in rainfall, droughts, expansion of deserts with their consequent population dislocations and food shortages. On the other hand, when rainy seasons do arrive, although they are shorter, we can expect severe flooding and damage to infrastructure.

What we can gather from all this is the need for each of us, within our respective capabilities, to develop and expand our ability to deal with risk and adversity. Disaster preparedness, or lack thereof, makes the difference in the final analysis. However, as the Secretary-General indicates in his report, only a small five per cent of global humanitarian funding is allocated for disaster relief. Much more needs to be done to provide additional preparedness funding to the pooled funds and humanitarian funding mechanisms, including consolidated and flash appeals and emergency funds of various agencies and non-governmental organizations.

The final topic I wish to mention is the establishment of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF). This has been a great step in the right direction to ensure the provision of timely and reliable humanitarian assistance to victims of natural disasters and armed conflicts. Djibouti is proud to contribute, however symbolically, to the CERF. We feel we have a duty to share, however small it may be, in the mitigation of global disasters that impact on our lives.

Mrs. Park Enna (Republic of Korea): At the outset, Sir, let me express the deep condolences of the Government and people of the Republic of Korea to the Government and people of Bangladesh on the huge disaster that cyclone Sidr has caused. We sincerely hope for early recovery through an enhanced humanitarian response on the part of the international community, in close coordination with the Bangladeshi Government.

Looking back on the past year, we have had both good news and bad news in the field of humanitarian assistance. The good news is that progress has been made on key initiatives, as duly noted in the report of the Secretary-General report in document A/62/87. First of all, the establishment of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) has been very successful, and system-wide coherence is being discussed throughout the United Nations Organization. Furthermore, many initiatives have been tested and have proven their validity, including the cluster approach and the humanitarian coordinator system. Partnerships for humanitarian assistance are also growing, and the Secretary-General's report noted that there is an ongoing dialogue to improve civil-military coordination.

As one effort to strengthen partnerships in the Asia-Pacific region, the Republic of Korea hosted the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Donor Support Group (ODSG) Partnership Meeting, which was held in Seoul on 12 and 13 June. The meeting was an opportunity for OCHA donor countries and the countries of the Asia-Pacific region to pool their wisdom and explore ways to enhance cooperation in the field of humanitarian assistance.

Unfortunately, we also face enormous challenges. Significant trends that may impede humanitarian assistance include rising urbanization, climate change, increasingly severe natural disasters and the growing threat of pandemics.

Bearing in mind these challenges, my delegation welcomes the report of the Secretary-General concerning system-wide coherence in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and the environment (A/61/836). We believe that it provides a sound basis for moving forward with reforms, and we encourage that practices aimed at strengthening system-wide coherence be put into effect as soon as possible.

In this process, the Secretary-General's role is crucial. He should continue to show initiative and strong leadership as he spearheads the reform process. We also believe that the international humanitarian system must adapt to climate change. The recent discussions of the high-level meeting on climate change should, therefore, be incorporated into our system-wide coherence response.

The Republic of Korea also strongly promotes gender mainstreaming in every humanitarian response and throughout inter-agency coordination. Women and children are more vulnerable in emergency situations; indeed, they account for the majority of victims in such circumstances. In particular, we are gravely concerned about the serious situation of sexual violence deliberately directed against women in many emergency situations. In this regard, we believe that the Emergency Relief Coordinator, relevant United Nations entities and Member States should strengthen their efforts to address the issue of sexual violence in their humanitarian activities.

As we all know, we can never have enough funds to satisfy every demand for humanitarian relief. Considering the practical limitations, my delegation believes that it is vital to distribute funding and assistance based on assessed needs. This approach is possible only if needs assessments are provided. Such assessments can help to ensure that assistance is effectively tailored to specific regions or States. For example, the ODSG Partnership Meeting in Seoul noted that in the Asia-Pacific region, natural disasters have a far greater impact than armed conflict, as shown by frequent flooding in Asia, including in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Indonesia, Viet Nam and the Philippines this past summer, and most recently in Bangladesh. Indeed, our region has accounted for 73 per cent of worldwide deaths due to natural disasters since 2000. That is why we need to pay more attention to risk reduction and preparedness.

Factors such as these should be carefully considered when decisions are made about the kinds of aid and assistance to provide. We believe that the United Nations should enhance its support of risk reduction and preparedness initiatives at the regional and country levels.

Another factor to take into account is humanitarian access. As the Secretary-General rightly pointed out, humanitarian access to populations in need

is a prerequisite for all humanitarian efforts. It is each Government's task to secure access to the field of emergency in its country. It is regrettable that some countries are intent on discouraging humanitarian actors from gaining access to regions in need.

In an effort to provide prompt, systematic and coordinated emergency relief abroad, the Republic of Korea enacted an International Emergency Relief Act in March 2007.

I will conclude by expressing my country's belief that the internationally agreed development goals and a human rights approach should be guiding beacons in our efforts to provide humanitarian assistance. The Republic of Korea takes this opportunity to reaffirm its pledge to work towards increased cooperation in improving and strengthening the United Nations system of humanitarian relief and assistance.

Mr. Shinyo (Japan): At the outset, we express our heartfelt condolences to the people of Bangladesh for the huge loss of life and the severe damage caused by the recent cyclone disaster. We feel compassion and are ready to work for the relief of the people in Bangladesh, together with the international community.

Japan welcomes the ongoing efforts to advance humanitarian reform, which will make for a more effective provision of humanitarian assistance and protection for those in need. We commend Under-Secretary-General Holmes and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) for the work they have done, together with other humanitarian partners, to strengthen the coordination of United Nations humanitarian and disaster relief assistance.

Every humanitarian organization must learn lessons from what has happened in the past and become even more expert at responding quickly to humanitarian emergencies. For that, leadership is needed on the part of the Emergency Relief Coordinator who, we hope, will continue to work vigorously to meet the challenge. For its part, Japan will continue to do its utmost to promote humanitarian reform.

We wish to underline three points today. First, with regard to humanitarian reform, it hardly needs to be said that the United Nations family is one of the largest bureaucracies in the world. Every bureaucracy, including the United Nations, has problems: rigidity, for example, or sectionalism, or being slow to spring into action when called upon. The humanitarian community of the United Nations has initiated an effort to address those issues, however, and we appreciate that.

We support the developments that are taking place, including the establishment of the Central Emergency Response Fund and the introduction of the cluster approach and humanitarian coordinators. These constitute a useful attempt to strengthen the Organization's humanitarian structure. There remains much to be done, but we hope the end result of strengthening leadership in the field will be that whenever the United Nations acts to provide humanitarian assistance, that assistance will be coordinated and coherent.

The reform process must be broader than that, however. We are facing a variety of challenges, for example, with regard to internally displaced persons, the response to "forgotten" crises, the safety and security of humanitarian personnel, the improvement of needs assessments and ensuring humanitarian access. Those are challenges facing the entire international community, and all Member States must therefore address them.

We wish to emphasize the value added to humanitarian reform by the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Towards a United Nations humanitarian assistance programme for disaster response and reduction: lessons learned from the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster" (A/61/699). It contains useful recommendations, and we would like to request the United Nations to adopt those that the Secretariat can manage to implement internally.

Secondly, we would like to underline the need to increase our investment in the transition from relief to development, as proposed in the report of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence. Japan agrees that we must work to achieve a seamless transition, and it recognizes that one important purpose of the informal consultations on system-wide coherence is to address that transition issue. I would add that the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, which OCHA manages, is a useful financial resource for effecting such a transition, and we would like to consult with others on how best to use the Fund to that end.

The challenge of transition also relates to peacebuilding in post-conflict countries. Peacebuilding

covers a variety of issues, including humanitarian assistance, the peace process, security, reconstruction assistance and nation-building, and the Government of Japan, in its Official Development Assistance Charter, has declared it of vital importance. As chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, we would like to make the maximal contribution to that body so as to produce a concrete and useful outcome as soon as possible by deepening the strategic discussion in the Commission and strengthening coordination with other entities, including the World Bank.

Thirdly, we would like to mention again this year the urgency of disaster reduction. The consequences of hazards can be substantially mitigated by taking appropriate disaster reduction measures. By building a society that can survive a major disaster, we can reduce the risk and also the magnitude of its consequences. We need to exert as much effort for risk reduction as we are currently exerting in providing a humanitarian response to disasters, and we need to do it comprehensively, by improving prevention, preparedness, enhancing response capacity and strengthening capacity-building in parallel. Humanitarian personnel, too, must address risk reduction as a part of the provision of assistance.

The Government of Japan is of the view that risk reduction is a priority in promoting human security and a vital pillar of sustainable development, and that it also has a critical bearing on how the world adapts to climate change.

As a nation with extensive knowledge and technology relating to disaster reduction, Japan has been actively involved in international cooperation in that area and wishes to continue that involvement. At the Asian-African Summit in 2005, for example, Japan announced that it would provide more than $2.5 billion over five years in assistance for disaster prevention, mitigation and reduction measures in Asia, Africa and other regions.

The target the international community must strive to achieve is clearly described in the Hyogo Framework for Action adopted at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, held in Kobe in January 2005, and we need to work towards it steadily and effectively.

From that viewpoint, we welcome the establishment of the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery of the World Bank, and the first meeting of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, held in June. We also welcome the development of such regional initiatives as the Tsunami Warning System, coordinated by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO.

We commend humanitarian personnel for carrying out their difficult responsibilities, often under severe crisis conditions. And we condemn the intimidation and killing of those who are fighting so valiantly for the well-being of others. We must do everything we can to ensure their safety. Most of all, we need to advance humanitarian reform, standing on the side of the people who are affected, including refugees and internally displaced persons, as they so desperately need our assistance. I assure the Assembly that Japan will do its part.

Mrs. Bhandari (Nepal): On behalf of the delegation of Nepal, I wish to express our appreciation for the reports of the Secretary-General submitted in connection with agenda item 71.

The world regularly faces challenges such as disasters, refugees, conflicts and other humanitarian crises. Recently, we have seen the devastating cyclone in Bangladesh. On behalf of the people of Nepal, I wish to express our sympathies to the Government of Bangladesh and to the victims of the cyclone. We hope that the international community will provide the assistance requested in response to this disaster. We believe that the United Nations has an important role to play in coordinating humanitarian and disaster relief assistance in these situations.

The lessons from past disasters tell us that the humanitarian response would benefit from a more systematic approach. In particular, the United Nations system can play a more proactive role in risk analysis, early warning and the coordination of response to humanitarian and disaster situations. We believe there is a need for a more sustained mechanism to secure resources for disaster and humanitarian response including through the Central Emergency Response Fund launched last year.

Humanitarian and disaster relief assistance faces many challenges including problems of access, coordination, safety and security of personnel, and the lack of adequate resources. Humanitarian personnel often face various threats to their safety and security, sometimes of even deliberate attacks and hostage-taking. Nepal deplores such attacks and calls for a

stronger mechanism for protecting the safety and security of humanitarian and other United Nations personnel.

Though the primary responsibility for protection of United Nations staff rests with host Governments, the United Nations system should do all it can within its reach to enhance the safety and security of its humanitarian and peacekeeping personnel.

The Department of Safety and Security should enhance its capacity to analyse threats to the safety and security of United Nations personnel and to devise a mechanism to prevent such threats. In particular, its capacity to negotiate during crises, such as in hostage-taking situations, needs improvement. There is a greater need for coordination among the United Nations system, Governments and non-governmental humanitarian agencies for handling the humanitarian aspects of disasters, refugees and internally displaced persons resulting from conflicts.

As a country prone to disasters such as earthquakes, floods and landslides, Nepal attaches great significance to the work of the United Nations in the area of humanitarian and disaster response. The Government of Nepal has given high priority to disaster prevention, mitigation, relief and rehabilitation and has integrated these concepts into development planning. However, we need more sustained support for strengthening our national capability in disaster and humanitarian response.

Nepal is committed to providing relief and rehabilitation to the victims of the decade-long conflict in accordance with the Comprehensive Peace Accord signed in November 2006 between the Government of Nepal and the Maoist Communist Party of Nepal. Pursuant to this agreement, the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction is working in coordination with relevant actors for the safe return of internally displaced persons to their homes and for returning land and property. Nepal would highly appreciate greater international assistance for efforts towards the relief and rehabilitation of the victims of the conflict and for the reconstruction of its infrastructure destroyed during the conflict.

We hope that the current dialogue among the political parties will lead to an early finalization of the dates for elections for the Constituent Assembly. With these and other developments in the peace process, we are confident that the humanitarian plight of the people of Nepal affected by the conflict of the past will be healed in the days to come.

In conclusion, Nepal is committed to work with other Member States to strengthen the coordination of United Nations humanitarian and disaster relief assistance all over the world.

Mr. Tarragô (Brazil): My delegation joins other delegations in conveying the condolences and solidarity of Brazil to the people and Government of Bangladesh with respect to the calamity that has befallen that country.

Brazil has increased its efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to areas and populations affected by natural disasters and complex emergencies. Those actions are taken in the context of our solidarity and commitment to the promotion and realization of human rights and development for all. They also represent for Brazilian society an opportunity for joint action in humanitarian affairs in a form of participation that is a requisite for the full realization of democracy.

The assistance provided to victims of the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2005 and the repatriation of Brazilian nationals from Lebanon as a result of the conflict in 2006 are recent examples that signal a new phase in Brazil's involvement in international humanitarian assistance, both in terms of the volume of the assistance delivered and in reaching far-flung areas.

Naturally, our assistance has been felt in neighbouring countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. In the past two years, Brazil has contributed resources or sent medicines, food and specialized personnel to eleven countries in the region.

My country has also granted refuge to an unprecedented number of people from Palestine. In 2007, it resettled in its territory more than 100 Palestinian refugees affected by the crisis in Iraq. We have done so in cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

In order to make Brazilian humanitarian officials better acquainted with the United Nations system and practices, Brazil hosted in March 2007 a seminar on international humanitarian assistance, with the presence of the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, the Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator and the President of the White Helmets Initiative from Argentina, who exchanged valuable

information with our civil defence and federal and regional authorities.

We have taken note of the Secretary-General's conclusion that the requests for humanitarian assistance are likely to increase, which will require additional efforts from member States and non-governmental organizations. We concur with the Secretary-General's view on the need for a multilateral, comprehensive and urgent response to address climate change, which has a direct bearing on many of the emergencies we have faced and will still have to face in the future.

We deem especially important the engagement of actors at all levels in the response to emergencies. We must therefore strengthen local, national and regional capacities so as to ensure a timely and adequate deployment of resources.

No less important than the engagement of relevant actors is coordination on the ground. We learned with interest of the results achieved so far by the cluster working groups. We look forward to a comprehensive evaluation of the merits of applying the cluster approach at the field level.

Despite the unexpected nature of many emergency situations, a preventive approach is possible and is ever more important. We support initiatives focused on risk reduction and preparedness, especially in vulnerable areas and communities. The unmatched experience of the United Nations in emergency situations must be fully shared so as to enhance local and national capacities. On the other hand, best practices at the local level must be incorporated into the expertise of the United Nations.

From our own experience in our territory, we have realized the crucial role played by community-based organizations and civil society, including NGOs, in rescue, rapid response and recovery. Their participation in the coordination efforts with Governmental agencies will greatly contribute to the effectiveness of the response system as a whole. For example, a Latin American and Caribbean network of psychological assistance in cases of emergencies and disasters was recently created by civil society with Governmental support.

The Central Emergency Relief Fund (CERF) has proved to be an important tool in responding to emergency situations. We are glad that the Fund is well on its way to reaching the goal of $500 million in resources. Brazil contributed to the Fund this year and expects to make a higher pledge at the high-level conference in December. We look forward to the results of the independent review of the Fund in 2008.

We wish to highlight the importance of unhindered access of humanitarian personnel to affected areas. We deplore the fact that, particularly in situations of armed conflict, this access is sometimes deliberately denied. Such denial is a violation of international humanitarian law, and, in many cases, implies violations to the international human rights law and refugee law. The State is responsible to protect its own population and this responsibility includes, in our view, ensuring access of humanitarian personnel to the affected people.

We remain concerned with the continued risks faced by humanitarian personnel around the globe, particularly in complex emergencies. We regret to learn from the September 2007 report of the Secretary-General on the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel (A/62/324) that some 4,000 incidents had taken place in the previous 12 months. Arrangements and policies must be adopted in order to provide both United Nations and locally recruited staff with adequate safety and security. Furthermore, crimes against humanitarian personnel can not remain unpunished: those responsible must be brought to justice.

One aspect that deserves our best attention is the transition from relief to development. In this regard, we believe that the Hyogo Declaration and the Hyogo Framework for Action should be fully implemented, in particular the commitments to assist developing countries, especially the more vulnerable and the disaster-stricken countries, towards sustainable development. States should be encouraged to strengthen their capacities, enact appropriate laws and pursue sustained, nationally-owned strategies to enable them to cope with the effects of disasters. In this endeavour, cooperation between States, the United Nations system and other relevant organizations is very important.

We would like to once more draw attention to the need for a revised and more comprehensive approach to humanitarian issues, one that goes beyond the dichotomy of providers and beneficiaries, donors and recipients, and financial aspects.

In many cases, developing countries, particularly those in the neighbourhood of conflict-stricken areas, provide substantial contribution, as they usually absorb massive refugee flows and bear the high economic and social costs of regional humanitarian emergencies. Developing countries should therefore be assured broader participation in decision-making and policy supervision of humanitarian affairs. Brazil remains committed to working towards that end.

Mr. Carmon (Israel): Allow me to congratulate the President on his able stewardship of the General Assembly. In the interest of time and brevity, I intend to condense the agenda items applicable to my delegation into one statement.

At the outset, my delegation wishes to extend its heartfelt sympathies to Bangladesh, which was recently hit by a disastrous cyclone. We offer condolences to the Government of Bangladesh and to the countless families who have lost loved ones, and we hope the humanitarian efforts to mitigate this severe natural disaster will continue to provide support and aid to the millions obliged to flee their homes and left devastated and destitute.

Coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance is a matter of grave importance for the United Nations. Israel, over time, has developed well-known and specific expertise in rapid response assistance and disaster management and views it as a responsibility to share these practices with the international community. When disasters strike — be they earthquakes, tsunamis or political conflicts — the first few days are often the most critical for life-saving activities. Hence, in the past, Israel has deployed rapid response, emergency search and rescue and medical teams to natural disasters in our region and around the world. To mention just a few cases in recent years, these include disasters in Armenia, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Sri Lanka and Turkey.

Regarding the statement delivered earlier today (see A/62/PV.53) by the Palestinian representative in connection with the report of the Secretary-General on assistance to the Palestinian people (A/62/82), it is regrettable that he once again focused on rhetoric and politics rather than on reality and meaningful solutions to the matters at hand. Surely, there are numerous complexities involved in considering the situation in our region, taking into account Israeli security and Palestinian stability. The internal violence among the Palestinians that we have witnessed lately has squandered too many opportunities for progress. The same applies to the continuation of daily Palestinian terrorism, among other factors. No one can detach himself or herself from this very stark reality, although, amazingly enough, the statement we heard earlier today did.

As many in this Hall are aware, due to the important choices made by the Palestinian leadership, there is a Government today that meets the standards of the international community. Hence, if we look at the reality on the ground, there are a number of initiatives and projects aimed specifically at providing assistance to the Palestinian people. But the statement made today by the Palestinian representative seems to ignore these important developments.

Consider the astronomical difference between my Palestinian colleague's politicized narrative and the reality on the ground. One reality on the ground is a sewage project, under the direction of the World Bank, under way in Beit Lahia in the Gaza Strip to alleviate a strain on the current cesspools near the village. Israel is working to expedite the building of the plant by tracking down non-metal pipes to be used in the facility.

Another reality on the ground is that, as of today, more than 230 Palestinian trainees in fields such as public health, small business, agriculture, educational planning and empowerment of women and youth are enrolled in projects and seminars sponsored by Israel through its Centre for International Cooperation (MASHAV). Hundreds of others have participated in similar programmes over the past 15 years.

Another reality on the ground is Israeli and Palestinian business leaders holding meetings, such as those between the Israeli Manufacturers Association high-level forum and its Palestinian counterparts, and the Portland Fund's initiation of an Israeli-Palestinian Chamber of Commerce. Yet another reality on the ground is that Israel has released, contrary to what we have heard today, approximately $250 million in tax and customs revenues, with the remaining sum, nearly $250 million more, to be transferred by the end of the year, in accordance with Palestinian wishes and instructions.

These are merely a few examples of practical steps being taken to assist the Palestinian Government and to create a better environment for progress. Israel

believes that this Palestinian Government provides a new opportunity to move forward in the peace process and realize the two-State vision, which is why it has eased movement and removed checkpoints in the West Bank, allowed Palestinian security forces deployment and consented to the transfer of supplies and equipment to those forces.

But no assistance will ever come at the expense of Israeli security or permit actions which would endanger the lives of our citizens. May I remind the Assembly that, while just yesterday Israel considered the release of 441 Palestinian prisoners as a gesture of goodwill, a barrage of more than 20 mortars was fired into Israel from the Gaza Strip.

The Palestinians must realize that Israeli security and safety are in their own national interest. As long as the rockets continue to fall on the people of Sderot and other Israeli cities, the crossings cannot operate properly. Terrorism is to blame for restrictions on the crossings and on access. Hence, taking responsibility for its security is the first and foremost step for Palestinians in order to see the promise of a new tomorrow.

With regard to draft resolution A/62/L.12, entitled "Strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster", Israel is pleased to be a sponsor and to join in the consensus, and we affirm the importance of wide and active international cooperation and coordination in mitigating the consequences of such accidents for the lives and health of all people.

Nevertheless, my delegation wishes to put on record, for the purpose of consideration at a later date, a matter of related concern. It is our hope that in the future draft resolutions on this item will deal not only with those affected in the countries and geographical areas, but also with all populations who once lived in the area of a catastrophe and were adversely impacted by such a disaster. Whether or not individuals have chosen to remain in the original area of a catastrophe is largely irrelevant to the fact that they continue to suffer and to bear the consequences of the disaster. In the specific case of Chernobyl, many individuals and families migrated to other countries. For instance, Israel has absorbed approximately 100,000 migrants from the Chernobyl area over the years. Hence, they too should be entitled to the same access to information and be included in research, studies and materials published on the health, environmental and socio-economic consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, especially those commissioned by United Nations entities.

Since draft resolutions on this item will be considered on a triennial basis beginning next session, my delegation has sought the opportunity to place our concerns on record in the hope that they will be raised for discussion during the next negotiations.

Mr. Mohamad (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express our admiration for the excellent manner in which Mr. Kerim has been guiding the work of the General Assembly.

I would also like to express our feelings of sympathy and solidarity with the Government and the people of Bangladesh with regard to the recent natural disaster there. We would ask the delegation of Bangladesh to convey to the Government and the people of that country our deep sympathy and condolences.

I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for the exhaustive report contained in document A/62/87, on the "Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations." We also wish to hail the efforts made by the relevant agencies and organizations active in the humanitarian sphere, such as the International Organization for Migration, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) — which deserve special mention — that are supported by national organizations, civil society sectors and associations that work to accelerate the access of those affected by crises to assistance.

In order to meet the global challenges of today, including humanitarian issues, we need broader understanding to strengthen cooperation and coordination with national institutions. The world is now seeing an increase in natural disasters and man-made ones. Some of the disasters recur under conditions where joint coordination and early warning mechanisms are required and those recurrent catastrophes have led to what we call the globalization of human disasters that cross national borders and thus multiply their dire effects.

In that regard, the Government of the Sudan would like to reaffirm the importance of complying with the guidelines for humanitarian assistance, including, neutrality, independence, transparency, integrity and respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a country.

The role of the States at the regional level is essential in complementing the efforts of the United Nations through the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. The regional role of States is exemplified by the experience of the Sudan in this regard. The Sudan has hosted the largest organization for emergency assistance in the world, Sudan Lifeline, to coordinate humanitarian assistance with the help of the national Government. On the basis of that experience and in addition to United Nations assistance in Darfur, the Sudan signed a humanitarian protocol in March 2007 with United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, John Holmes. That had a positive effect and facilitated the accelerated provision of humanitarian assistance to Darfur through the fast-track system.

The Sudanese Government has created a high-level committee to follow-up on the implementation of that protocol. The committee includes representatives of the United Nations and its specialized agencies, as well as representatives of donor countries to follow-up on the implementation of the protocol. The effects of the stabilization of humanitarian assistance — as is clear in the reports of the Secretary-General on the provision of humanitarian assistance — are reflected in the stabilization of malnutrition statistics, the reduction of mortality rates and the stabilization of public health rates, with the result that there are no epidemic diseases in the region at the current time.

That could not have taken place without cooperation and coordination between the United Nations and its specialized agencies and the Government of the Sudan and its important national organizations. At a time when we affirm the importance of humanitarian assistance for man-made disasters, the United Nations must, by the same token, give greater attention to peaceful sustainable solutions.

While we commend the report of the Secretary-General (A/62/87) on humanitarian conditions in Darfur, we wish to comment on certain parts of the report, especially paragraph 15. Regions where humanitarian access has been stagnant because of the lack of security are the areas where rebel movements are in control. Those are the only areas that witness attacks on humanitarian workers. The Secretary-General's reports to the Security Council have indicated that the rebel movements are the ones that carried out those attacks.

My delegation wishes to express its greatest appreciation and gratitude to all of those who have taken part in humanitarian assistance to Darfur.

The experience of the Central Emergency Response Fund, as indicated in the report, has demonstrated the importance of providing assistance in areas beyond traditional channels, by giving immediate assistance to meet the appeals made to answer the challenges in areas that need to be stabilized. That underscores the need for joint action and development assistance, which, through rapid and small response projects would encourage return from camps to the original regions. It also emphasizes the importance of complementarity in humanitarian assistance and the need for development in order not to rely on assistance alone, but also to provide a smooth transition from assistance to development and rebuilding.

The report of the Secretary-General highlighted in its recommendations the importance of strengthening cooperation between the United Nations and regional and non-governmental organizations. While we reaffirm the importance of non-governmental organizations in the humanitarian sphere, we should say that some NGOs are using humanitarian assistance as a front to carry out objectives other than humanitarian assistance.

Very recently, we saw an attempt by a French non-governmental organization to use a humanitarian action as a front to try to remove Sudanese and Chadian children and smuggle them away from their homes and take them abroad in the guise of humanitarian assistance. Such alarming action on the part of some NGOs leads us to ask that all parties comply with humanitarian guidelines in order to achieve the desired objectives.

We would like to strengthen coordination of United Nations humanitarian assistance in order to address recurrent and complex cases of emergency in various parts of the world.

Ms. Rodríguez de Ortiz (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We wish first and

foremost to express the solidarity of the people and Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela with the victims and their relatives in Bangladesh, who have just been affected by the recent tragedy of cyclone Sidr that caused many deaths.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela attaches particular importance to humanitarian and emergency assistance in the case of disasters at the international level. In that context we wish to reaffirm resolution 46/182 of December 1991, which sets out the guiding principles of United Nations humanitarian emergency assistance. We must work towards global mobilization to create greater awareness of the true magnitude of the problems and threats we are facing. That includes reducing the risks of disasters. We must involve all actors: not only all levels of Government, but also all relevant international, regional and subregional organizations. We must move from words to action. Venezuela is convinced of the need to promote all activities in our region that will enable us to reinforce that idea. We have our conscience and the tools we need to move forward. We have no excuse. The international community can count on my entire country as a natural ally in this struggle.

At the national level, there is the commitment of the President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and a national civil protection and disaster management organization, established by the constitution. Since February 2005, we have mandated that body to strengthen preventive actions before disasters occur. Thus, we have moved from disaster management to risk management in order to present a solid, cross-cutting and multisectoral platform composed not only of governmental decision-making bodies, but also entities with a definite impact: private companies, non-governmental organizations, volunteers and the community itself. We have established a national risk management commission, whose primary objective is to reduce risks of a structural or non-structural nature. We have also established the Simón Bolívar Humanitarian Task Force to strengthen disaster prevention and assistance efforts. Breaking with the assistance-based paradigm of such bodies, we have made it a multidisciplinary and multisectoral unit focused on risk-reduction activities. Thus, we have moved from the damage and needs assessment approach, which characterizes emergency response organizations, to an approach based on risk and needs assessment, which addresses specific risks of all kinds at the national level.

This human team is based in five regions of our country, where it participates in humanitarian assistance efforts at the international level in Central America, the Andean countries, the Amazon region, the Caribbean and the rest of the world. In addition, the organization has a national, state and municipal fund that provides financial support for disaster prevention and assistance activities. For example, it has participated in activities in Bolivia, Cuba, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica and Suriname, as well as in efforts to support displaced Lebanese citizens evacuated during the hostilities in that brotherly country last year. In addition, we are favourably considering providing humanitarian assistance in response to requests by the brotherly countries of Chile, Bangladesh and Mexico. In Bolivia, we participated both before and after the 2006 floods in preventive actions that helped to reduce the damage caused.

The organization is also working to identify, assess and monitor disaster risks and to strengthen early-warning systems through the national disaster prevention and assistance centre. This is the technical-scientific component of the national civil protection and disaster management organization, which enables us to monitor and process national information on disaster risks with a view to decision-making in the area of prevention and emergency assistance.

Likewise, we are making great efforts in the area of formal and non-formal education. Through educational programmes in which local communities are being trained to protect themselves, we are teaching such communities to organize, plan and develop risk and disaster management programmes at the local level. The national Government is also working to reduce underlying risk factors through educational missions, including literacy instruction and training at the basic, diversified and university levels, thus incorporating a large population excluded from the educational system. These programmes include comprehensive training in civil protection aimed at risk and disaster management. Other social missions in the areas of health, nutrition, housing, energy and indigenous populations, inter alia, are firmly committed to reducing the high levels of poverty and marginalization that have existed in our country and

that, as in many other parts of the world, are increasing the frequency of disasters.

Moreover, we are actively participating in and supporting the activities of relevant regional and subregional organs, including the work of the High-level Conference on Disaster Reduction organized by the Association of Caribbean States, held in Haiti last week from 14 to 16 November. We participated in order to demonstrate our conviction that we must strengthen our prevention, mitigation and response capacities in order to reduce the risks of disasters and that it is our generation's duty to support such activities.

Another important aspect that we should highlight is the recent visit to Venezuela by a delegation from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), led by Ms. Margareta Wahlström, Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator for Humanitarian Affairs. The visit, which was an unqualified success, further strengthened our relationship with that specialized agency of the United Nations.

Finally, the delegation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela believes it is important to reiterate the request made to the Secretary-General for a detailed report on OCHA's disbursement of funds in support of humanitarian assistance activities and the impact of such activities in countries affected by natural disasters.

The Acting President: I now call on the observer of the Observer State of the Holy See.

Archbishop Migliore (Holy See): At the very outset, I wish to convey sincere condolences to the people and the Government of Bangladesh in the wake of the terrible cyclone that left thousands dead and millions with property and livelihoods in ruins. Our appreciation goes to all those who responded immediately to the humanitarian emergency.

The utter destruction that we have just seen in Bangladesh illustrates the many devastating effects of the natural and man-made disasters confronting peoples all over the world year after year. Men and women working for international, national and local humanitarian organizations — many of which are faith-based — risk their lives and their future to aid the victims of such catastrophes. It is for the safety of those humanitarian workers and for the welfare of the suffering people whom they assist that we must work for a truly effective, coordinated and humane disaster-response system.

Last year, the high rate of natural disasters around the world was, sadly, accompanied by many extremely costly man-made ones. Armed conflicts have devastated societies in many places, taken lives, ruined economies, set back development and frustrated efforts to restore peace. Given the terrible consequences of armed conflict, we must once again recall that, in the unfortunate case of war, all parties involved must comply fully with the rules and principles of international law and international humanitarian law related to the protection of humanitarian personnel, such as allowing full and unimpeded access by humanitarian personnel to all people in need of assistance. Likewise, those same parties are under obligation to guarantee safe and unhampered access to humanitarian aid to civilians and all victims of armed conflict.

Member States have focused increasingly on the need to prevent and reduce risks associated with disasters. The adoption of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 demonstrated the commitment by countries to place preparedness and prevention on a par with response and recovery. This policy is particularly relevant at the national and local levels. By increasing the knowledge and capacity of local actors to respond effectively to emergency situations, countries can reduce the long-term cost and consequences of a disaster. Local civic and faith-based organizations are highly effective in this regard, and thus must be fully engaged, supported and, when necessary, duly protected.

The position of the United Nations within the international community puts it in a key position to coordinate humanitarian response to disasters. For this response to be effective, the Organization needs the full cooperation of the States directly concerned, especially in ensuring that the latter fully comply with their obligations under international law and international humanitarian law, and that they fulfil their responsibility to protect their own people.

Moreover, as humanitarian agencies grow in number and variety, the United Nations could enhance collaboration among them and harness their complementary capacities, while respecting their differences and the specific aims and principles of each

organization. We note with interest the work done in this regard by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee.

Long-term and sustainable post-disaster recovery continues to be a challenge and a necessity. While individual Governments are responsible for developing long-term recovery strategies, collaboration with local agencies is important, in particular with those that have acquired concrete knowledge of the situation and have a long-term deployment of resources in the region. This could cushion unintended harmful effects, especially on the more vulnerable sectors of society, due to the transition from emergency humanitarian assistance to the recovery phase.

Finally, long-term recovery requires the continued interest and support of the international community. An outpouring of good will and international solidarity most often follow live reports and images of humanitarian disasters; but as attention and resources move to other priorities, it quickly weakens or even disappears. This could be very costly, especially in post-conflict situations in which the probability of a relapse into violence is very high, or in places where a truly catastrophic natural disaster could wipe out the economic base of entire communities.

A steady commitment is necessary if a sustainable and long-term recovery system of peoples and regions affected is to be achieved. We therefore welcome initiatives to highlight often-forgotten humanitarian situations and underfunded humanitarian efforts throughout the world.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.

United Nations A/62/PV.55

General Assembly
Sixty-second session

Official Records

55th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 20 November 2007, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kerim ..... (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda items 71 and 72 (*continued*)

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: reports of the Secretary-General (A/62/324 and Corr.1)

(a) Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/62/72, A/62/83, A/62/87 and A/62/323)

(b) Special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

Report of the Secretary-General (A/62/310)

(c) Assistance to the Palestinian people

Report of the Secretary-General (A/62/82)

(d) Strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster

Report of the Secretary-General (A/62/467)

Draft resolution (A/62/L.12)

Assistance to survivors of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, particularly orphans, widows and victims of sexual violence

Report of the Secretary-General (A/62/310)

Mr. Castellón Duarte (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me first to express my solidarity with the Government and people of Bangladesh, Mexico and the Dominican Republic for the losses they have suffered as a result of the enormous floods, and to the people and Government of Chile for the disaster following the latest earthquakes.

The Caribbean coast of Nicaragua with its ethnic diversity and great cultural riches occupies 46 per cent of the country and is organized into two autonomous regions. Its human and natural resources, history, cultural diversity and geographic location make up the basic elements to ensure proper living conditions for the people and to make substantial contributions to the country in social, economic and political terms.

However, on the morning of 4 September 2005, Hurricane Felix — a category-five hurricane — hit the country 51 kilometres north of Bilwi in the North Atlantic Autonomous Region, revealing once again the vulnerability of the area — owing to the systematic poverty and exclusion experienced in the Caribbean region of Nicaragua — as those principally affected by the hurricane were indigenous peoples of Miskito, Sumo-Mayangna and African descent.

That recent event was a tragedy in human, cultural, environmental and economic terms. But it also

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provided an opportunity to launch an organized and coherent effort involving communal, territorial, regional, municipal and national authorities to deal with the emergency and resume development of the region.

Based upon information collected after the hurricane, it affected more than 200,000 people. More than 300 people died and 133 are missing. That irreparable loss of life was also accompanied by a large-scale ecological disaster with enormous consequences. Among the 1.3 million hectares of land affected, 477,000 hectares of forest were devastated. That loss should not be measured in terms of the loss of timber, but in the loss of a rich biodiversity and living ecosystem that provided the historical and cultural meaning that the forest represented for the indigenous communities.

The destruction of infrastructure is evidenced by the destruction of 20,394 homes, 57 churches, 102 schools and 43 health care centres. 86,538 hectares of traditional and non-traditional agricultural crops were destroyed as well as 40,011 large and small farm animals. 70.8 per cent of the fowl, 18.9 per cent of the pigs and 10.2 per cent of the cattle were lost. Many fishing boats and much equipment were also destroyed, in particular small boats and 48,355 pieces of fishing equipment.

500 kilometres of all-weather roads were affected, including bridges and drainage pipes. It also caused the partial destruction of the only sea port that the area has. The damage caused by the hurricane is estimated at some $850 million.

The response of friendly States and the United Nations to the tragedy was immediate, including a Flash Appeal by the Central Emergency Response Fund and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, which provoked an immediate reaction from the international community. In light of all of that, on behalf of the Government and people of Nicaragua, I wish to thank all of those States from all parts of the world who have given us aid and who continue to provide relief while we are working to deal with the crisis caused by the hurricane.

At the same time I wish to extend our thanks to the Secretary-General and United Nations staff, as well as to the organs and specialized agencies of the system and the non-governmental organizations that have involved themselves in this crisis.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 49/2 of 19 October 1994, I now call on the observer for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Ms. Johnson (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies): I speak here today on the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance, an issue of great significance to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). But, before I go into my prepared remarks, let me extend the deep condolences of the International Federation, all of our members' national societies, Red Cross and Red Crescent, to the people of Bangladesh, who are in these days very busy responding to the terrible tragedy of the cyclone that affected their country last week. I wish to assure the Bangladesh Government of our deep commitment to continue to do everything we can as the International Federation to mobilize the appropriate resources to assist the Bangladesh Red Crescent in the relief efforts, in recovery and in risk reduction efforts going forward, and of course in full coordination with the Bangladesh Government and United Nations agencies and other humanitarian actors.

As we have been reminded through the course of yesterday's debate and this morning's, natural disasters of all kinds affect peoples around the world every day. This debate today is actually about the future of millions of vulnerable people throughout the world.

I will focus some of my comments on the way environmental degradation and climate change are impacting humanitarian assistance, and on the implications for Governments and humanitarian organizations alike.

We welcome the increased attention of the international community to climate change and we applaud the determination of the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly in bringing about intergovernmental dialogue within the United Nations system on what may be one of today's greatest global challenges. It is also a challenge the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) will address at the thirtieth international conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent next week in Geneva.

The Secretary-General's speech at the launching of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in Valencia last week was a clear call to action and

highlights the urgency of a consolidation of political will. Much relevant background is in his report on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, which confirms the dramatic increase in disasters over the past 20 years. Statistics also point to a dramatic increase in localized, small-scale disasters affecting communities of under 25,000 people.

We are all well aware of the need to invest in disaster preparedness, and many speakers in this debate have already made that point. Let me return to the situation in Bangladesh to illustrate it. The Bangladesh Red Crescent, supported by the International Federation, had been investing in preparedness and early warning measures for more than 20 years before Cyclone Sidr hit the country. That demonstrates what can be done. The Bangladesh Red Crescent Society worked with national authorities to ensure that those preparedness efforts were very effective. Despite that, of course, there has been a terrible loss of life and of livelihood, and we are now desperately working with people there to recover their lives and dignity. We welcome the acknowledgment of that work and the endorsement of the International Federation's emergency appeal by the Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. John Holmes, at his press conference on 16 November.

The International Federation believes that an increased emphasis on vulnerability and risk reduction will reduce the impact of such disasters. Our experience shows that investing in risk reduction measures can save thousands of lives and billions of dollars every year, and at a fraction of the cost of disaster response. We are working with National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies at one level and with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to deliver a more risk-informed humanitarian action. We call on all Governments to give new priority to risk reduction measures, and on donor Governments to raise significantly their support for that action.

The increased number of smaller disasters points to the need to enhance disaster preparedness and response capacity at the local and national levels. That encompasses effective national disaster management mechanisms that include a Red Cross or Red Crescent society. Many countries have established such mechanisms, and good examples of their effectiveness are available every week, as demonstrated in Bangladesh.

A national society provides a unique bridge linking Government capacity and policy to the efforts of ordinary people in small villages and communities across the country. A national society works as an auxiliary to its national authorities in the humanitarian field and is present throughout the country and at the grassroots, thanks to its volunteer base in many communities. The IFRC calls on Governments to enhance partnerships with their National Red Cross or Red Crescent Society to improve national and local disaster preparedness, risk reduction and response capacities.

Another vital component of national disaster preparedness is legal preparedness. The IFRC's International Disaster Response Laws, Rules And Principles Programme has been developed to help Governments improve their regulatory frameworks for those disasters that require international humanitarian assistance. Well-functioning legal and policy frameworks can minimize bureaucratic barriers and maximize the quality and coordination of international aid.

Over the past 18 months, the International Federation has conducted a multi-stakeholder consultation involving over 140 States, national societies, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations on how legal issues emerging in international response to non-conflict disasters can be more adequately addressed at the national level. The consultation process has resulted in the formulation of important recommendations for strengthening legal preparedness at the national level, including draft guidelines for strengthening national legal preparedness. That will also be discussed at the thirtieth international conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent next week in Geneva.

Many local and national disasters do not receive sufficient attention or assistance from the international community. IFRC has therefore significantly scaled up and improved its use of its own Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF). The Fund delivers start-up cash to Red Cross and Red Crescent societies within 24 hours of a disaster to ensure life-saving early action. Financial support from DREF, for instance, to the Mozambique Red Cross has enabled it to quickly respond to neglected, small-scale disasters, such as drought and cholera, as well as to better-known disasters, such as this year's floods.

The International Federation relies on donor support to strengthen its support of local and national response to small-scale disasters. The Silent Emergencies Fund of the Netherlands Government and the Netherlands Red Cross is an excellent example of possible funding partnerships and good humanitarian donorship in that field.

Although I have focused on climate-related disasters, we also continue to respond to industrial disasters. The inclusion in this debate of the agenda item relevant to the Chernobyl disaster is an important reminder of just that need. Since 1990, the IFRC, together with the national societies of Belarus, Ukraine and Russia, have been implementing the Chernobyl Humanitarian Assistance and Rehabilitation Programme (CHARP) to address the basic needs of those living in the area affected by the Chernobyl disaster.

After 17 years, CHARP has accumulated unique practical experience in how to support affected populations and establish early detection, which can be used in preparing and responding to future industrial accidents and disasters. However, despite considerable contributions from the Irish Government and the Japanese Red Cross, our appeal for 2008-2009 remains seriously underfunded. The IFRC calls on Governments to support the human development activities undertaken by national societies, including those to be outlined by the United Nations action plan for Chernobyl recovery to 2016. The IFRC also calls on Governments to sustain their political will and engagement in the tripartite ministerial process.

The IFRC is determined to reduce the number of deaths, injuries, illnesses and overall impact from disasters, diseases and public health emergencies. We are committed to coordinating with the United Nations and all relevant stakeholders in our humanitarian action and to supporting local and national initiatives. On the occasion of this important debate, I would like to remind us all that this requires better preparedness and contingency planning, more flexible funding, an increased focus on risk reduction at the community level and upward, and a readiness to effectively address the humanitarian consequences of climate change.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 47/4 of 16 October 1992, I now call on the observer of the International Organization for Migration.

Mr. Dall'Oglio (International Organization for Migration): At the outset, on behalf of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), I would like to express our deepest sympathy to the Government and the people of Bangladesh at this moment of suffering for the loss of human lives and the devastating consequences caused by Cyclone Sidr.

Once again, the General Assembly debate on the strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations is taking place in the wake of yet another major natural disaster. That in itself is a somber reminder that the incidence and severity of disasters associated with natural hazards continue to intensify.

Strengthening cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters is a topic intrinsically characterized by collaboration and partnership between a broad range of stakeholders, particularly in the areas most relevant to IOM's operational work: situations of population displacement, sudden population movements, and forced migration within and across borders.

The relationship between the environment and migration is now attracting increased attention. The complex links between environmental change, human security and migration are yet to be fully understood, but undoubtedly, the human impact associated with natural disasters due to climate change and vulnerabilities linked to population growth, environmental degradation and unplanned urbanization, among other factors, is on the rise.

While certainly not the only scenario leading to environmentally induced migration, large-scale human displacement in the wake of natural and sudden calamities is perhaps the most familiar one. Devastating tsunamis, earthquakes and floods have uprooted communities, leaving millions without shelter and basic services. In some cases, the restoration of livelihood in affected areas becomes permanently compromised, making return unfeasible. However, it is also recognized that the scale of displacement causing what we now call environmental migration as a result of the gradual deterioration of the environment is far greater than the displacement resulting from individual events, even catastrophic events. IOM has been called upon to contribute to this debate and to advance an

intergovernmental dialogue on these emerging but crucial topics. The forthcoming Council of IOM, to be held next week in Geneva, will devote one of its sessions to climate change, environment and migration.

IOM is a committed actor in the ongoing humanitarian reform process, alongside humanitarian partners from the United Nations system and the Red Cross Movement, including as an active participant in the cluster approach and within the Global Humanitarian Platform. Inter-agency collaboration in the implementation of the cluster approach within the Inter-Agency Standing Committee is now beginning to offer preliminary but promising indications of the achievements that can be made in terms of improved coordination and coherence, if this approach is followed consistently by all partners.

As we near the two-year mark of the cluster approach, we have an opportunity to highlight both its achievements and the challenges it faces. IOM has been participating in the elaboration of the cluster approach and assumed the role of global cluster lead for camp coordination and camp management in internal displacement situations resulting from natural disasters, for which the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has the corresponding lead in situations of conflict-induced displacement. That joint approach is facilitating the building of partnerships and synergies at both the central and field levels with greater coordination and collaboration. The cluster approach should be seen as a way to better respond to the needs of those displaced by conflict or natural disasters. It supports national responses and fills gaps where the national authorities need international support and solidarity. National Governments should be able to call upon any of the cluster leads as a focal point in relevant sectors whenever appropriate.

While it is a cluster lead in camp coordination and camp management, IOM also continues to work on a variety of other, no less important, areas in emergencies, providing assistance and protection to the displaced. The IOM response to the issue of internally displaced persons (IDPs) continues to grow in collaboration with others in the areas of shelter, early recovery and transition, safe evacuation and transportation, return and integration. Additionally, with a new focus on protection in emergencies, IOM is active in the protection cluster and is carrying out training for emergency staff to ensure that protection issues are mainstreamed throughout our operations.

Among the various emergency funding mechanisms available to intergovernmental organizations such as IOM, we would like to highlight the relevance and usefulness of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), which allowed IOM to quickly deploy capacities and resources in response to 16 crises in 2007 alone. An increase of the contribution to CERF so that it may reach its target goal by 2008 would certainly be a most welcome development.

The report of the Secretary-General (A/62/323) also touches on the topic of the possible use of military assets in disaster settings. IOM particularly welcomes the commissioning of the independent study on the effectiveness of using foreign military assets in international disaster response, as it is crucial to identifying best practices for their deployment, coordination and use in disaster situations. While we believe that humanitarian organizations must continue to be at the forefront of humanitarian aid, the scale of some recent disasters has shown that in certain situations national and international military forces have the necessary capacity at their disposal to respond in an adequate and timely manner. The logistical support and expertise associated with such assets can prove lifesaving in terms of transportation and in reaching remote and vulnerable communities. IOM-civil-military cooperation has contributed to the establishment of disaster preparedness and management teams that have strengthened and sustained national capacity to more successfully deal with such crises, such as the response to the earthquake in Pakistan, to the tsunamis in Indonesia and Sri Lanka, and in Afghanistan.

To conclude, IOM is committed to those most vulnerable in times of crisis and remains dedicated to working resourcefully and proficiently with its partners in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. We express here our deep appreciation to our partners and supporters, in particular to the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the leadership of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for their unwavering commitment to the improvement of humanitarian response capacities.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 48/265 of 24 August

1994, I now call on the observer for the Sovereign Military Order of Malta.

Mr. Humphreys (Sovereign Military Order of Malta): Allow me to express my sincere thanks, on behalf on the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of Malta, for the opportunity to take the floor and present the views of the Order on the strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations. Also, on behalf of the Order, I extend our condolences to the people of Bangladesh on the great harm done by the recent cyclone. They remain in our thoughts.

In the past year, large-scale natural disasters alone affected 143 million people and resulted in more than 23,000 deaths. Of course, natural disasters are not the only tragedies that require an emergency humanitarian response. The Order is pleased that the Central Emergency Respond Fund (CERF) continues to make progress towards its objective of improving field-level coordination and further strengthening the humanitarian response of the United Nations in often underfunded crises. The Order of Malta fully recognizes the need for coordination in the field and the pre-eminent role that mechanisms like CERF and United Nations agencies can play in that respect. However, the Order believes that management and funding should not be overly centralized.

The Order of Malta, with its more than 80,000 dedicated volunteers working in 120 countries, works actively in partnership with United Nations agencies, States and local and international non-governmental organizations to further strengthen a synchronized response to humanitarian challenges.

For example, in Burkina Faso, serious flooding at the beginning of September killed or injured dozens of people, displaced 28,000 and washed away vast agricultural lands. At the request of the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Order in Burkina Faso provided community tents, camp beds and blankets. Also, emergency and ambulance corps, set up by the Order's French Association, helped to transport victims to the nearest hospital structures.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Order of Malta, in collaboration with the World Food Programme (WFP), launched a comprehensive food distribution programme that provides approximately 5,000 internally displaced families from the community of Ninja in Bakavu in the Kivu province with 368 tons of food. Safety for the Order's personnel during the distributions was ensured by local administration and military authorities.

In the case of an emergency situation, it is imperative for humanitarian assistance not only to provide immediate relief to victims, but to develop long-term support systems. The areas affected by the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster are one case in which that transition is vital, and it is there that the Order has demonstrated its ability to broaden its role from immediate relief to long-term development. Immediately following the tsunami, the Order of Malta, in close cooperation with local partner organizations, was in South India providing emergency relief in the form of clothing, shelter, food and medical aid for flood victims and, in parallel, assessing projects for the reconstruction phase.

As the Secretary-General's report mentions, the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the Indian States affected by the tsunami is one of the highest in the country. In the Tamil Nadu region, the Order employed its experience with the virus to start a comprehensive prevention project in 33 villages, and then expanded its commitment to fighting the infection. In addition to learning how to prevent and control further transmission of the disease, people learn how to live with the disease and affected family members receive training on extended home-based care and support. Projects with timetables stretching far into the future are planned and executed in close consultation with national authorities, ensuring the Order's lasting and meaningful presence in an area.

The Order always strives to accomplish two goals in the execution of its humanitarian work. First, it seeks to place local non-governmental organizations at the centre of the relief effort and the training of local staff at the core of many of its projects. Secondly, the Order strongly believes that a long-term commitment is necessary to achieving a lasting impact on the community. That is exemplified in our support to the Palestinian people. The Order of Malta, for 17 years, has operated the Holy Family Hospital of Bethlehem-Palestine, where more than 36,000 healthy children have been delivered. Those works are often carried out under difficult and dangerous conditions.

The report of the Secretary-General on the issue states that the safety of humanitarian and United Nations personnel remains precarious. Significant

measures have been taken to improve the safety and security of humanitarian aid workers, but they continue to be victims of physical attacks, threats and robberies. They are often the first to respond to crises in the most unsafe regions, and the last to remain – long after financial resources ebb. The current numbers are more than just statistics to the Order of Malta, which last year lost 29-year-old Dr. Ezmeray Azizi, who was killed in an ambush in North-West Afghanistan, along with a UNICEF colleague. The Order stands with the Secretary-General in his appeal to Member States to fulfil their obligation under the Charter of the United Nations to ensure the safety of all humanitarian aid workers. It is only with the full commitment and cooperation of all Member States that meaningful steps to enhance security for humanitarian workers can be achieved.

The Order of Malta's humanitarian principles, neutrality, impartiality and independence provide the credentials to continue delivery and to improve its effectiveness in the provision of humanitarian relief and development. Allow me to assure the Assembly that the Order is responding daily to the challenges that humanitarian work presents, and we will continue to closely follow the leadership and initiatives of the United Nations and its agencies.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 45/6 of 16 October 1990, I now call on the observer of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Mr. Buff (International Committee of the Red Cross): The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is pleased to address the Assembly on the subject of humanitarian coordination, particularly in connection with armed conflicts and other situations of violence.

The humanitarian world has evolved rapidly over the past few years as more and more players enter the arena, often with different objectives, operating standards and activities. The humanitarian bodies within the United Nations have embarked on a process of reform. The main donor Governments have also begun a process of collective reflection. Foreign military assistance is increasingly present in humanitarian crises, and the role of secular and religious non-governmental organizations, private companies and other players is growing as well. In that constantly changing environment, the ICRC intends to remain the benchmark organization for neutral, independent and strictly humanitarian action and for international humanitarian law, both through its action on the ground and in its dialogue with beneficiaries, Governments, donors, parties to conflicts and other stakeholders.

Thanks to its active presence worldwide, the ICRC is able to develop and maintain contacts with all those who have a significant impact on the course of armed conflicts and on the humanitarian problems that those conflicts create. Such contacts are crucial in gaining access to the field and in permitting the ICRC to conduct its activities for the victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence. For the ICRC, humanitarian coordination should take place first and foremost in the field. It should be reality-based and action-oriented; in other words, it should be based on real capacities available in the field in emergency situations and not on declarations of intent.

The ICRC has a unique mandate to protect persons affected by armed conflict and it intends to remain the benchmark organization in that area as well, in particular by helping to ensure that all parties to armed conflicts meet their obligations towards civilians, by improving the protection afforded to persons deprived of their liberty, by restoring family links and by obtaining reliable information on missing persons.

With regard to assistance, an activity most of the time closely linked to protection, the ICRC will continue to maintain its approach of covering all emergency needs by providing quality health care in general and medical care in particular, in addition to its relief, water and sanitation activities. It is currently reinforcing its capacity to evaluate the results and impact of its activities.

The ICRC is strongly committed to remaining a reliable and predictable organization that conducts itself in a consistent manner and whose work is underpinned by a strong culture of accountability. It will continue to strengthen its ability to learn from its own experience and from that of other organizations.

Humanitarian needs in complex emergencies largely exceed the capacity of any single organization to cope. Many agencies with varying objectives and principles for action are therefore needed to respond to such emergencies. The diversity of humanitarian actors and approaches can enhance the response and alleviate

suffering if all those involved manage to act in a complementary fashion, in keeping with their respective operational abilities and expertise and with the relevance of their activities to the situation on the ground.

The ICRC takes part in coordination efforts together with other humanitarian organizations. It cooperates in particular with its natural partners, the national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, in the countries where it works. The ICRC invests in those relationships with a view to strengthening its own capacity for action and that of its partner national societies, in cooperation with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. The ICRC also gives preference to cooperation with national societies participating in international relief operations, in accordance with the rules and agreements of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

At the international level, the ICRC continues to take part in humanitarian-coordination forums. Those include the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, where it enjoys the status of standing invitee; the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response and the new Global Humanitarian Platform. In addition, the ICRC seeks to maintain and strengthen its bilateral relations with other major humanitarian organizations.

A good example of that is the agreement reached in November 2006 by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the ICRC on individuals and populations of concern to each organization. Taking into account the specific mandates and primary roles of the two organizations, we have agreed to consult one another and to coordinate our activities with a view to ensuring their complementarity, both in the field and at headquarters.

In keeping with its all-victims and all-needs approach, the ICRC has agreed with UNHCR to pursue a structured dialogue in areas of mutual concern relating to protection and assistance for internally displaced persons and refugees. The ICRC is also engaged in this type of dialogue with other major humanitarian agencies within the United Nations system, such as the World Food Programme and UNICEF.

In conclusion, the ICRC is convinced that, in the best interests of the victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence, humanitarian coordination should maximize the added value that each organization can bring to the field. The ICRC sees its added value mainly in being a truly independent and neutral humanitarian actor with, globally, very broad access to those in need of protection and assistance as the consequence of armed conflict or other situations of violence.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on these items.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/62/L.12, entitled "Strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster", as orally corrected.

Before proceeding to take action on draft resolution A/62/L.12, I should like to announce that, since its introduction, the following countries have become sponsors of the draft resolution: Albania, Argentina, Austria, Cambodia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, the Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Honduras, India, Israel, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, the Philippines, Portugal, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Thailand and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/62/L.12, as orally corrected?

Draft resolution A/62/L.12, as orally corrected, was adopted (resolution 62/9).

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 71 and its sub-items (a), (b) and (c), as well as of agenda item 72.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (d) of agenda item 71?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 10.55 a.m.

United Nations A/62/PV.56

General Assembly

Sixty-second session

Official Records

56th plenary meeting
Monday, 26 November 2007, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kerim ..... (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Organization of work

The President: Before taking up the items on our agenda for today, I would like to inform members that consideration of agenda item 50, "The role of the United Nations in promoting a new global human order", which was scheduled for today, 26 November, has been postponed to a later date to be announced.

Also, I would like to inform members that the reports of the First Committee will be considered on Wednesday afternoon, 5 December.

Agenda item 121

Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly

The President: Today we will consider a subject of great importance to us all, the agenda item on the "Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly". Under this title, our efforts to impart new vigour into this great institution have been ongoing for over 16 years. We now need to ask ourselves what our ultimate objective is. How can we enhance the authority and the efficiency of the Assembly? Our leaders have called for a stronger United Nations. Could we not instead call this exercise: "The role of the General Assembly in strengthening the United Nations system"?

The 2005 World Summit Outcome Document reaffirmed our central position as the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations. It also recognized our role in setting standards and codifying international law. We should strive to live up to this mandate in our everyday work. To promote more effective multilateralism, to find global solutions to global problems, it is incumbent upon all of us to bolster the authority and the international standing of this Assembly.

At the opening of the general debate, two months ago, I suggested that the General Assembly should be more of a dialogue, not a monologue; more focused on substantive results; more engaging and insightful; and exemplify this through greater cooperation and mutual respect. I would like to thank all Member States for delivering on these suggestions through your active contribution and proposals.

Member States are the driving force of our success and I encourage members to take the initiative. It is first and foremost by systematically tackling the challenges that we face together and achieving results that the General Assembly makes itself stronger, more effective and more relevant to the lives of the global public.

In this regard, I would like to thank Kyrgyzstan for bringing forward a draft resolution on social justice, which has been sponsored by over 80 Member States. Additionally, I note the cooperative way the Czech Republic and the Dominican Republic approached elections to the Security Council. I call on all Member States to continue to work together in this manner, enthusiastically and in cooperation, as we have also done on mandate review, so that we can make

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progress on other important issues, such as climate change, the Millennium Development Goals, and Security Council and management reform.

This means that on system-wide coherence, for example, the practical success of the pilot countries, at the country level, should sway the opinion of the Assembly in New York, rather than the other way around. To give all Member States the opportunity to demonstrate our renewed leadership on priority issues, I shall, inter alia, convene debates on counter-terrorism in December, on climate change in February 2008 and on management reform in April.

As the Charter stipulates, the relationship between the General Assembly and other principal organs must be complementary, not competitive. We must continue to develop our relationship in an open, transparent and cooperative manner to strengthen the Organization and better accomplish our common goals. In this regard, I maintain regular contact with the Secretary-General on substantive issues and supported his request to brief the Assembly on recent developments. I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his support and cooperation.

I have also met periodically with the Presidents of the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, as well as with the chairs of the Main Committees to enhance cooperation and spread best practices. Additionally, I have promoted the Assembly's interaction with civil society and the private sector and our cooperation with parliaments, particularly through the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Our outreach with these and other important constituencies, including the media, must continue to be developed. Our message must be consistent, compelling and relevant to everyday life and we must resist giving the perception of institutional introspection.

The effectiveness of the presidency, and his or her office, has an important impact on the quality and organization of the General Assembly's work. This is contingent not only on his or her political and diplomatic skills, but also on the support and cooperation of Member States and the Secretariat.

Commensurate with the role envisaged of the presidency in the Charter, the budget of the presidency, including his or her office, should be financed entirely from the regular budget, rather than from the current makeshift arrangements. In addition, and in proportion to the growing responsibilities of the presidency, the Office of the President should be appropriately staffed and properly situated within United Nations Headquarters. That would ensure that each elected President — whether from a developed or developing country, no matter how large or small — has an equal opportunity to deliver results. An entirely United Nations-funded budget would enhance the independence of the presidency and increase transparency and accountability to Member States.

In Assembly resolution 61/292, Member States decided:

> "to establish, at its sixty-second session, an ad hoc working group on the revitalization of the General Assembly, open to all Member States, to evaluate and assess the status of implementation of relevant resolutions, to identify ways to further enhance the role, authority, effectiveness and efficiency of the Assembly, inter alia, by building on previous resolutions, and to submit a report thereon to the Assembly."

I believe that it is particularly important that the Working Group focus on ensuring that existing resolutions are fully implemented. It could also consider other practical steps to improve our working methods, such as finalizing a repository of best practices for the General Assembly and its subsidiary bodies and periodically updating the rules of procedure to include recent Assembly decisions.

The Working Group will begin to consider these and other issues shortly. Today, I am very pleased to announce that His Excellency Ambassador Towpik, Permanent Representative of Poland, and His Excellency Ambassador Loizaga, Permanent Representative of Paraguay, have agreed to act as Co-Chairs of the Working Group. I would like to ask all Member States to extend your fullest cooperation and support to the Co-Chairs and invite members to bring forward constructive proposals and practical suggestions.

Mr. Lemos Godinho (Portugal): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of

Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

The European Union wishes to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting and for providing the membership with an opportunity to look ahead to our discussion of General Assembly revitalization during the sixty-second session.

But before doing so, we would also like to express our appreciation for the efforts undertaken during the sixty-first session by the former President of the General Assembly, Her Excellency Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, aimed at revitalizing the General Assembly, and specifically the convening of thematic debates on issues of particular relevance to the membership.

We are grateful as well to the co-facilitators, Ambassador Daniele Bodini of San Marino and Ambassador Paul Badji of Senegal, for their hard work and widespread consultations, which have drawn active participation from the European Union (EU).

The EU supports efforts aimed at strengthening the General Assembly's role and authority, in line with the Charter of the United Nations, the principles and objectives outlined in the 2005 World Summit Outcome document and the measures adopted in several relevant General Assembly resolutions.

At this stage we believe that efforts at the practical level are paramount to ensure an overhaul of the General Assembly's performance.

The EU strongly believes that the General Assembly revitalizes itself, first and foremost, when it takes up issues of genuine concern to our peoples and to the international community as a whole. It is our collective duty to engage in meaningful initiatives, to live up to the expectations of our peoples and to make the work of the General Assembly ever more relevant.

Furthermore, it is the responsibility of each and every member State to apply in its daily business what has already been agreed by all and considered useful and necessary to revitalize this body. We recall that the revitalization of the General Assembly has been an ongoing process over several years and that numerous resolutions have already been adopted in the past. What was agreed at that time should be implemented, as was acknowledged by this Assembly when it adopted resolution 61/292.

Implementation will also be at the core of the proceedings of the ad hoc working group to be established at this session, as foreseen in the resolution I mentioned earlier. The mandate given to the ad hoc working group is, inter alia, "to evaluate and assess the status of implementation of relevant resolutions" (resolution 61/292, para. 2).

Not all the EU's well-known views and positions on General Assembly revitalization are fully reflected in those resolutions. On many occasions we would have liked to see the General Assembly adopt bolder and more ambitious decisions that reflected our positions better.

We believe, however, that promoting the implementation and the consolidation of existing resolutions and decisions will bring real added value and will impact significantly on the way the General Assembly, and the United Nations as a whole, conducts its work.

At the end of the current session we may well come to the conclusion that some of the shortcomings we recognize in the way that the General Assembly carries out its work and in the way that the major United Nations bodies relate to each other can be addressed by means of effective implementation of existing resolutions and decisions. To this end we look forward to the timely submission of a comprehensive report by the Secretary-General, as envisaged in paragraph 1 of resolution 61/292, so that that report can constitute a valuable basis for an informed and action-oriented discussion in the framework of the ad hoc working group.

We look forward to working with the persons you have appointed to conduct our work in the current session, under your overall leadership.

The EU undertakes to engage, in a constructive and pragmatic manner, in the proceedings of the ad hoc working group with a view to contributing to a successful outcome of our collective efforts aimed at further revitalizing the General Assembly.

Mr. Benmehidi (Algeria): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

First of all, I would like to express NAM's appreciation for the hard work done by Ambassador Badji of Senegal and Ambassador Bodini of San

Marino, the co-facilitators during the sixty-first session.

In adopting resolution 61/292 the General Assembly decided to assess during the current session the extent to which all its previous resolutions and decisions related to the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly have been implemented.

At the outset of this debate, the Non-Aligned Movement would like to recall the validity and relevance of its principles and positions regarding this matter.

The Non-Aligned Movement reiterates that the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, which must be guided by the principles of democracy, transparency and accountability and must be achieved through consultations, is a critical component of the comprehensive reform of the United Nations. Its objectives should continue to be to strengthen the role and position of the General Assembly as the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations.

The NAM also emphasizes that the improvement of the Assembly's procedural and working methods is only a first step towards more substantive improvements aimed at restoring and enhancing the role and authority of the General Assembly, including in the maintenance of international peace and security as stipulated in Articles 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 35 of the Charter.

The NAM, while expressing its readiness to continue to support all ongoing efforts to strengthen the central role and authority of the Assembly, wishes to underline that it will continue to oppose any reform proposal that seeks to contradict this objective. It will also continue to oppose any approach that seeks to or could result in undermining or minimizing the achievements of the General Assembly, diminishing its current role and functioning or raising questions about its relevance and credibility.

The Non-Aligned Movement expresses its concern that during the previous rounds of consultations, recurrent proposals were made, aimed at undermining the central role of the Assembly and its authority, including in relation to its prerogatives regarding administrative and budgetary questions. It is the hope of the NAM that any forthcoming proposals aimed at upgrading the revitalization of the work of the Assembly will be made in a spirit which excludes any such challenges.

With respect to assessing the status of implementation of all prior resolutions on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, in particular landmark resolutions 58/126, 58/316, 59/313 and 60/286, the NAM is deeply disappointed that, at this stage of the sixty-second session, the report requested by the General Assembly in paragraph 1 of its resolution 61/292 in continuation of the reporting requirements established by resolutions 59/313 and 60/286 has not been made available to the membership, thus depriving participants in the forthcoming consultations of the necessary political guidance that was expected to emanate from the Assembly on the occasion of this debate. Nonetheless, the NAM wishes at this stage to make the following comments on a number of aspects.

The Non-Aligned Movement notes with growing concern the continuous attempts on the part of the Security Council to encroach upon other principal organs of the United Nations and their subsidiary bodies with respect to issues that clearly fall within the functions and powers of those latter structures. That was, again, the case recently when the Security Council held a thematic debate on the effects of climate change (see S/PV.5663), thus departing not only from the provisions of the Charter but also from the agreement reached among Member States to increase coordination and cooperation among the principal organs as well as complementarity in their work programmes.

The NAM underscores, once again, the need for full respect for the functions and powers of the principal organs, in particular the General Assembly, and for maintaining the balance among them in accordance with the Charter. In this respect, the NAM welcomes the proposals of the President of the General Assembly to convene a panel discussion on climate change and an informal meeting of the General Assembly on the implementation of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, and we look forward to making a substantive contribution at those events. Further, the NAM remains particularly concerned about the exercise of the Security Council setting norms and establishing definitions in areas beyond its competence.

The NAM expresses its satisfaction that the General Assembly has played a central role, both during the preparatory process of the 2005 World Summit and during the follow-up phase; this has allowed the Assembly to reassert its prerogatives. It also expresses its satisfaction at the progress made in implementing previous decisions, such as the improvement of transitional arrangements between the outgoing and incoming Presidents of the General Assembly and at the level of the bureaux of the Main Committees, the reinforcement of the Office of the President of the General Assembly and its increased media exposure, the valuable contribution made by the Main Committees in improving their methods of work, in particular by improving the interactive nature of their debates, and in many other areas.

However, NAM members remain convinced that genuine revitalization of the work of the General Assembly cannot afford to avoid addressing the main issue: the lack of implementation of all General Assembly resolutions and the underlying cause for that, namely, the lack of adequate resources made available to that end.

In this regard, the NAM is encouraged by the fact that Member States have been able to reach a common understanding on how to reinvigorate the discussion on mandates review, with a view to rationalizing the reallocation of freed resources. It is the hope of the NAM that the issue of providing adequate resources for the implementation of the decisions of the General Assembly will be addressed in a similar spirit.

Finally, the NAM looks forward to the convening of the Open-ended Working Group on the Revitalization of the General Assembly, as called for by resolution 61/292, and expresses its readiness to participate in the Group's work in order to arrive at a detailed and fair assessment of the status of implementation of all previous decisions and, if deemed necessary, to work towards the adoption of a new resolution aimed at further improvements.

Before I conclude, allow me to congratulate the Permanent Representatives of Poland and Paraguay for their appointments as co-Chairs of the Open-ended Working Group for the sixty-second session. I thank them for agreeing to assume this heavy task.

Mr. Ali (Malaysia): My delegation is pleased to participate in this debate on agenda item 121, on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly. Malaysia wishes to associate itself with the statement just made by the representative of Algeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

I would like to recall paragraph 30 of the Millennium Declaration, whereby our heads of State or Government resolved to restore the central position of the General Assembly as the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations, and to enable it to play that role effectively. That call was reaffirmed by our heads of State or Government during the 2005 World Summit, where they reaffirmed the central position of the General Assembly as the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations, as well as the role of the Assembly in the process of standard-setting and the codification of international law. They also called for strengthening the relationship between the General Assembly and the other principal organs to ensure better coordination on topical issues that require coordinated action by the United Nations, in accordance with their respective mandates.

We have been discussing the issue of the revitalization of the General Assembly since 1991, and we have made some progress over the years. It is important that this process continue as it is part of the ongoing process of United Nations reform. As the General Assembly is the most representative organ of the United Nations, we must dedicate ourselves to finding consensus on measures to revitalize the Assembly so that it can fulfil its mandate in accordance with the Charter. We must build upon the work done at previous sessions; the key to success is the implementation of their resolutions. We look to your leadership in this process, Mr. President.

In this regard, we share the sentiments of the Non-Aligned Movement about the absence of the status report that has been requested since the fifty-ninth session on the implementation of all resolutions regarding the revitalization of the General Assembly. This call was most recently reiterated in resolution 61/292. The status report would be an important input for our discussions, as it would allow us to take stock of what has been implemented and how to move forward. In the absence of such a report, we will be unable to take effective steps and measures to revitalize the General Assembly. We call for the timely issuance of the status report to enable Member States to study it and prepare for the Ad Hoc Working Group that has just been established.

We would also like to hear from you, Mr. President, concerning your proposals on the work plan for the Ad Hoc Working Group. It is important that the discussions on this item, like those on other agenda items, be held in an open, transparent and inclusive manner.

Any reform process should lead to the strengthening of the central role of the General Assembly, as well as restoring and enhancing its role, including in the maintenance of international peace and security, as provided for in the Charter. That entails strengthening its relationship and coordination with other organs. That has been adequately addressed in previous resolutions, which have stressed the need to fully respect and maintain the balance among the principal organs of the United Nations within their respective purviews and mandates under the Charter.

Efforts to enable the General Assembly to perform its functions as set out in the Charter must not be limited to procedural measures pertaining to its working methods. Improving the Assembly's procedures and working methods is only a step towards further substantive improvements in and revitalization of the Assembly, as stipulated in resolution 55/285.

If the General Assembly is to maintain its central position as the chief deliberative and representative organ of the United Nations, it must be cognizant of the current developments and take steps to address them. We welcome the initiative to have thematic debates, panel discussions and high-level segments with a view to producing concrete, practical and action-oriented results. We welcome the identification of the themes for the present session. In that regard, Mr. President, we are pleased that you organized the high-level event on climate change in September and have identified the continued consideration of the agenda item on climate change as a matter of priority for the General Assembly.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate that my delegation will work constructively with you, Mr. President, in launching the process of consultations among Member States in the Ad Hoc Working Group concerning the status report on the implementation of General Assembly resolutions.

Mr. Mansour (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, on behalf of my delegation, I wish to congratulate you, Mr. President, on the manner in which you are conducting this debate, which is particularly important to Member States. I also wish to congratulate the representatives of Senegal and San Marino on their considerable efforts during the sixty-first session as facilitators on the issue of the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Algeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement concerning the agenda item before the Assembly today. We wish to make the following additional comments.

With regard to strengthening the role and the authority of the General Assembly, this year, once again, we continue to debate the issue of the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly. Again, we must emphasize that this is a rather sensitive process that should be pursued with resolve, seriousness and commitment by all Member States. It was in that spirit that our heads of State or Government reaffirmed, at the September 2005 World Summit, the Assembly's central role as the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations.

My delegation believes that strengthening the role and the authority of the General Assembly involves, inter alia, including in its agenda obvious issues that are of particular importance, both to the Organization and to the international community at large. It also involves holding major thematic debates so that Member States can come to agreement on major substantive and timely issues. In that context, we welcome the quality of the thematic debates held at the previous session — a practice that, we are convinced, will continue under your presidency, Sir.

Furthermore, we believe that strengthening the role and the authority of the General Assembly also requires that we recognize its role regarding the maintenance of international peace and security. Indeed, while it is generally acknowledged that Article 24 of the Charter entrusts the Security Council with primary responsibility in this area, that responsibility is not exclusive. The General Assembly should thus give greater consideration to issues of international peace and security, in accordance with the relevant articles of the Charter and the historic resolution 377 (V), "Uniting for Peace".

The issue of the relationship between the General Assembly and other principal organs of the United Nations should be the object of in-depth consideration.

Such consideration should be carried out in plenary meetings and within the framework of an approach based on cooperation, maintaining balance and respect for the Charter roles of each organ.

In that spirit, while we appreciate the cooperation between the presidency of the Economic and Social Council and that of the General Assembly, we believe that greater coordination between the two organs would be useful, particularly in the choice of thematic debate subjects — a choice that must respect the old and new mandates recognized for the Economic and Social Council.

The issue of the reports that the Security Council must submit to the General Assembly under the relevant Charter articles continues to be a focus of our attention. Indeed, despite repeated appeals by Member States, the Council continues to present annual reports of a factual nature. The Council should also be able to present to the Assembly analytical reports, including on specialized subjects.

On another note, I wish to revisit the issue of the implementation of General Assembly resolutions. It must be noted that respect on the part of all Member States for the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly would greatly contribute to the strengthening of the Assembly's authority. My delegation supports the various ideas put forward in that regard, aimed at identifying the factors that are hindering the implementation of resolutions.

Our second subject concerns improving the working methods of the General Assembly. We are pleased that a number of measures related to improving the Assembly's working methods have been implemented — particularly the Main Committees' use in recent years of interactive debates, round tables and question-and-answer sessions. Those practices have made it possible to enrich the deliberations and the decision-making process of the Main Committees. However, these efforts still fall short of Member States' expectations.

Likewise, my delegation recognizes the merits of the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his report on revitalization of the General Assembly issued in October 2006 (A/61/483), calling on Member States to draft more concise, targeted and concrete resolutions and decisions and to limit the length of statements in the General Assembly and the Main Committees. However, we believe that that in no way affects the sovereign rights of Member States with regard to taking the floor and submitting draft resolutions.

At another level, we believe that several of the measures proposed during debates on improving the General Assembly's working methods — measures on which no decision has yet been made — should be reconsidered. That applies to, inter alia, the proposal aimed at organizing the work of the Assembly's Main Committees in two substantive periods per session and harmonizing the Committees' best practices, which, it should be recalled, differ from Committee to Committee.

My third category of comments concerns the General Assembly's role in selecting the Secretary-General. The issue of selecting the Secretary-General has been debated over the past two years in the Open-ended Working Group, but no concrete measures have been decided upon. We continue to believe that, together, we should consider how Article 97 of the Charter should be interpreted in terms of greater involvement by Member States, through the General Assembly, in selecting the Secretary-General. Preferably, that should be done before the next election in that regard.

Finally, I wish to express my delegation's support for the mandate adopted by the General Assembly in August to establish, at the sixty-second session, an ad hoc working group on the revitalization of the General Assembly to

> "evaluate and assess the status of implementation of relevant resolutions, to identify ways to further enhance the role, authority, effectiveness and efficiency of the Assembly, ... and to submit a report thereon to the Assembly." (*resolution 61/292, para. 2*)

Mr. President, my delegation is very pleased with the establishment of the Working Group that you have just announced, and we congratulate the Co-Chairs, the Ambassadors of Poland and Paraguay, pledging to them the full support of the Tunisian delegation.

We hope that, in the context of this Working Group, the Member States will look into ideas and innovations that could return the General Assembly to its central place in the United Nations system. It is time to commit to this path seriously and with determination.

Mr. Malmierca Díaz (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation aligns itself with the statement by Algeria on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. I would like to simply add a few comments on this item.

Cuba would like to indicate its concern over the absence of a report on the revitalization of the General Assembly, which makes it difficult for the Member States to carry out an in-depth consideration of this important question. We reiterate our request for such a report to be published by the Secretariat as soon as possible so as to facilitate a debate of the quality that the importance of this issue requires.

The revitalization of the General Assembly is a decisive element for true reform of the United Nations. We cannot talk about an Organization with more democratic and effective actions, if the General Assembly does not fully exercise the power that the Charter confers on it. That process should reaffirm the central role of the General Assembly as the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations, as recognized by the Charter and the Millennium Declaration.

It is important that when this process concludes, the Assembly strengthens its characteristics of independence and of an organ for comprehensive debate, where the freedom of its Member States to address the issues of interest to them is not restricted or limited.

We underscore the need to achieve an adequate balance among the principal organs of the United Nations, in accordance with the Charter, and for the Member States of the Organization to end attempts to transfer General Assembly agenda items to the Security Council.

The Security Council must strictly abide by the Charter's provisions, as well as by all resolutions of the General Assembly, as the main organ of the United Nations, and it must stop interfering in the questions that are clearly fall within the functions and powers of other principal organs of the United Nations and their subsidiary bodies.

My delegation would like to express its concern at the establishment of rules and definitions by the Security Council that exceed its competence, disregarding that, in accordance with Article 13 of the Charter, the General Assembly has the primary responsibility for the progressive development of international law and its codification.

In order to avoid those irregularities, which are setting precedents within the United Nations system, the Presidents of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council must carry out regular debates and coordinate among themselves with regard to the agenda and working plan of the respective principal organs they represent in order to make them increasingly coherent and complementary. This should be carried out in a manner mutually reinforcing and respectful of the mandates of each organ, avoiding duplication of effort and interference in the functions assigned to each.

The failure to implement the numerous Assembly resolutions must be eliminated. The resolutions constitute an important body of norms, but they remain inert because their non-compliance is related to the lack of political will on the part of the States that have political, military or economic power. It seems natural, then, that this also happens with the numerous resolutions referring to the reform of the United Nations and to the very revitalization of the Assembly, such as resolutions 58/126, 58/316 and 60/286, whose level of implementation is limited.

Cuba reiterates that the revitalization of the Assembly must not be merely a bureaucratic process exposed to the interests and whims of a few rich and powerful countries who try to impose unilateralism and use multilateralism only when it suits their interests. At the same time, we further hope that, as a result of such a process, the interaction between the Secretariat and the General Assembly will strengthen, so that the former can answer more effectively to the mandates that the Member States determine.

I conclude my statement by reiterating that in this complex yet necessary process of revitalizing the Assembly, the Cuban delegation's full willingness and constructive participation can be depended on.

Mr. Malhotra (India): We are pleased to participate in the debate on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly and to associate ourselves with the position of the Non-Aligned Movement as expressed by the delegation of Algeria.

The General Assembly is the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations. Its revitalization should restore it to its

position of primacy, as per the Charter. It must ensure that the Assembly addresses itself to the developmental problems confronting the overwhelming majority of United Nations Member States. A revitalized General Assembly must also set the global agenda, especially on economic and financial issues.

Over the last few years, Member States have agreed on certain measures to rationalize and streamline the work and agenda of the General Assembly and to improve its working methods and those of its Main Committees. Those efforts have sought to give a sharper focus to its work. They have also led to addressing the needs of the Office of the President of the General Assembly, including during a period of transition. Efforts to trim the heavy burden of papers submitted to the Assembly have reduced the volume of such documentation. Such procedural changes mark a useful beginning.

However, the General Assembly cannot be revitalized via better coordination or streamlining of procedures alone. Central to revitalization is a focus on substantive measures aimed at restoring and enhancing the Assembly's role and authority to the position originally envisaged in the Charter.

The General Assembly can hardly be revitalized while its role, prerogatives and authority are being undermined by encroachment on its agenda by the Security Council. The balance between the principal organs of the United Nations envisaged in the Charter must be maintained and respected. Of special concern is the encroachment by the Security Council on issues that traditionally fall within the Assembly's competence, such as the process of standard-setting and codification of international law. Also of concern is the holding of thematic debates in the Security Council on issues that frequently fall within the purview of the General Assembly or the Economic and Social Council.

Resolution 60/286 reiterated that in addition to the Security Council making its annual report more analytical, it should submit special reports to the General Assembly. It is also important to fulfil this provision while the Council considers ways to further improve the quality of its reports to the Assembly. At the same time, we should guard against an over-zealous attitude that may lead to the General Assembly, in turn, intruding into areas that are primarily the core competence of other United Nations bodies.

It is equally important to implement the provisions of previous Assembly resolutions on the matter. It may be recalled that a substantive area that resolution 60/286 attempted to revitalize is the role of the Assembly in the selection of the Secretary-General. It sought to put in place a more inclusive and transparent procedure for the appointment of the Secretary-General, consistent with Article 97 of the Charter. Furthermore, resolution 59/313 requested the President of the Assembly to propose interactive debates on current issues on the agenda of the Assembly, in consultation with Member States. A procedure for ascertaining the views of Member States in deciding the themes for such thematic debates would help identify issues of current interest to Members and avoid duplication of discussions elsewhere in the United Nations.

In a dynamic and changing world, it is important to focus on the more substantive aspects of Assembly revitalization and to do so on an ongoing basis. In that context, we look forward to the setting up of the open-ended working group, in line with resolution 61/292, with a view to enhancing the role, authority, effectiveness and efficiency of the Assembly through an implementation of previous resolutions and consideration of creative new proposals.

In conclusion, we would like to congratulate the Permanent Representatives of Paraguay and Poland and wish them every success in the important work as the co-chairs of the open-ended working group.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): The General Assembly is debating today one of the most important items on its agenda. That item acquires its importance from the nature of the role and authority of the Assembly, the chief deliberative and policymaking body and the most democratic organ of the Organization, not only because it comprises all the Member States, but also owing to its responsibility for supervising the balance of authority and obligations of the main and subsidiary organs, following up on the implementation of their mandates and taking the necessary measures to fulfil them, if deemed necessary.

With those considerations in mind, heads of State and Government underscored, in the 2005 World Summit Outcome, the necessity of adhering, within the context of United Nations reform, to the purposes and the principles of the Charter and reaffirmed that the credibility of the United Nations and an increase in its

capacity to meet its responsibilities is increasingly linked to the ability of the Assembly to exercise its institutional responsibilities. Despite the resolutions adopted by the Assembly in previous years, which included only some of the important steps needed to revitalize its role, many crucial reforms are still needed in that regard. Such reforms are becoming increasingly controversial and require the sincere political will of Member States to enhance good governance at the international level.

Egypt associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Algeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. I would like, in that connection, to stress a number of important points.

First, revitalization of the role of the Assembly should be based on monitoring the effective implementation of Assembly resolutions on this issue, while continuing to negotiate additional steps aiming at promoting further effectiveness of the Assembly. Those endeavours will not be successful if we limit our actions to rationalizing the agenda and mandates of the Assembly and its subsidiary committees, and to the reports submitted to them. Rather, the Assembly should be revitalized through a clear plan that starts with identifying these resolutions and the concrete obligations they stipulate and ends with their full and effective implementation.

Secondly, despite the success of the election of the eighth Secretary-General of the Organization and his appointment by the Assembly by consensus upon the recommendation of the Security Council, the deliberations on the responsibility and authority of the Assembly vis-à-vis the Council's role highlighted the fact that we must continue our search for ways and means to increase the role of the Assembly in that process. That should be accomplished in accordance with the provisions of the Charter and resolutions 51/241 and 60/286. A transparent mechanism should be established that allows the Assembly to evaluate candidates for the position and submit their names for consideration by the Council. It should also oversee the criteria that govern the Council's recommendations to the Assembly, without prejudice to, on one hand, the role of the Council in making recommendations and, on the other hand, the authority of the Assembly in approving such recommendations and appointing the recommended candidate or suggesting alternative candidates to the Council.

Thirdly, it is important to enhance the principal role of the Assembly in areas related to international peace and security, in accordance with Articles 10, 11, 12, 14 and 35 of the Charter. That role should not be limited to financing United Nations missions in situations of conflict or war, but should rather play a real and concrete preventive role and contribute to efforts aimed at achieving the settlement of current disputes.

Fourthly, it is imperative to respect the distinction stipulated in the Charter between the roles and functions of the principal organs of the Organization. We must also strengthen the prerogatives of the Assembly in overseeing the way the Security Council fulfils its main responsibilities in prioritizing the interests of the general membership of the United Nations over the national interests of its Members.

Fifthly, we must promote the capacity of the Assembly to address cases where the Security Council fails to undertake its obligations to maintain international peace and security, owing to a lack of unanimity among its permanent members that negatively affects the possibilities for settling those conflicts, and leads to the prolonging of those conflicts and to the suffering of people. This increases our conviction that an expansion of the membership of the Council is necessary in order to include new permanent members with the same rights and privileges as the current members, including the veto. That would strike a much-needed balance between the international Powers in the Council.

In expressing their concern over the magnitude of this situation, the heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Movement requested, at their summit meeting in Havana, the permanent representatives of the members of the Movement to submit a draft resolution to the Assembly aimed at restoring its authority in undertaking the actions needed to deal effectively with cases in which international peace and security are endangered but the Council has failed to address, owing to the misuse of the veto power, particularly in cases of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and the cessation of hostilities between belligerent parties. Members of the Non-Aligned Movement will draft that resolution as soon as possible.

Sixthly, in the same context, we must enhance the capacity of the Assembly to uphold the principles that

govern the assessment of Member States' contributions to the Organization's budget, the most important of which is the capacity to pay, and to ensure that the principles of justice and equality embodied in the principle of "one country, one vote" will continue to govern our decision-making. That indicates the need to restore balance and confidence-building between developing and developed countries and the Secretariat, in order to implement the mandates established by Assembly resolutions and to ensure the financial resources necessary in that regard.

In order to achieve the aspirations of the general membership with regard to the revitalization of the role and authority of the Assembly, the ad hoc open-ended working group should be looking at the proposals of Member States that seek to lay down a framework for the implementation of previous resolutions on this important issue. At the same time, they should discuss the status of implementation of Assembly resolutions and the means to ensure follow-up on their implementation, including through a comprehensive mechanism ensuring the commitment of Member States to implementing those resolutions, and even, if needed, by amending the Charter to achieve those aims. In addition, they must exert a sincere parallel effort in reviewing mandates in order to decrease the burden on the Assembly by avoiding redundancy and duplication. That will ultimately revitalize the role of the Assembly by increasing the obligatory nature of its resolutions and decreasing redundancy. This also represents a more integrated approach to all aspects of the reform of the United Nations.

Mr. Gallardo (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): The challenges of globalization call for governance even in the international sphere, and we should not be surprised that since 1991 Member States have decided to act within the United Nations to eliminate the threats and paralysis that were caused by the bipolarity of the cold war. Since 1991, we have gone through different phases in this attempt. Today, we are more fragmented, and no country alone can manage globalization. The power of each of the nations represented here has its limits.

Today, the United Nations is, more than ever, the general reference for the international agenda and its priorities. It is our responsibility as States to guide the Organization with efficiency, clarity, vision and a strategic approach, in order to help to resolve the problems of peace and security, development and the environment, human rights, the right to humanitarian assistance, international law and the coherence problems of the United Nations, its mandates, its Secretariat and its other bodies. This is an enormous task that lies in the hands of 192 delegations.

We acknowledge the leadership of the Presidents of the General Assembly. They must guide our debates at every session, with a short agenda of priorities. But in the final analysis, it is we, the Member States concerned, that must own this process. There can be no revitalization of the General Assembly without the political will to work together, to achieve goals in areas that interest all parties and, in that way, to contribute constructively to the adoption of significant decisions by the General Assembly.

Our discussions on how to tackle climate change; on how to make progress in attaining the Millennium Development Goals and the goals of the partnership for development; how to be more creative and show more solidarity in financing for development; how to move forward with the implementation of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy; and how to continue the reform of the United Nations: all of these are substantive and central questions in the Organization's endeavour to maintain its political relevance and its added value.

In recent years, we have seen the General Assembly competing with other organs and feeling threatened by the growth in their activities and functions. Sometimes, we have to put ourselves in the shoes of our partners and ensure that the General Assembly promotes new debates, such as thematic debates in the areas of the maintenance of international peace and security, and that it adopts a more cooperative approach with the Secretariat, the Economic and Social Council and even the Security Council.

We must concern ourselves with our working methods. Making the General Assembly more effective could mean limiting the length of debates and organizing a better system of specialized bodies reporting to the General Assembly. We have to ask ourselves if our working methods and our practices have made it less interesting to follow our debates, which some people perceive as monologues. We have to ask ourselves if we cannot organize more interactive meeting formats.

Does the negotiation of certain resolutions only among interested delegations or through consultation systems involving restricted ad hoc groups, even though necessary, make us less transparent? Should we not have other documents besides resolutions that transmit our decisions or reflect public opinion in our debates? How many of the 11 most recent resolutions adopted on the revitalization of the General Assembly are annexed to the General Assembly's rules for ease of reference? How can we establish a standing mandate review process in order to prevent giving the impression of a body that does not follow up on its decisions in timely manner?

Those are, very briefly, some of the ideas that my delegation believes it is important to raise. We have to continue to stress that we must better organize our work. That is the utility of the Working Group that we have set up. In this Working Group and in its mandate my delegation sees the possibility of working along three main lines: first, the strategic function of prioritizing our work; secondly, the development of a cooperative approach with other bodies of the United Nations system; and, finally, generating and evaluating ideas on how to make our working methods more systematic, how to disseminate them and how to improve them.

Peru knows that, with the United Nations, the expectations are always greater than the possibilities. If we are to enhance its effectiveness, we must put our political will into play and organize ourselves better.

In conclusion, we would like to welcome the appointment of the representatives of Paraguay and Poland to facilitate the work of the Working Group. We wish both of them every success.

Mr. Badji (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): My delegation concurs with the statement made by the representative of Algeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement on agenda item 121. We are pleased to participate in this debate on the revitalization of the General Assembly, which is one of the fundamental aspects of United Nations reform.

Mr. President, like your illustrious predecessors, such as Ms. Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, whose commitment I hail, you are showing your will to work with Member States in strengthening the principal deliberative organ of the United Nations. You can count on the complete availability of the Senegalese delegation, which will spare no effort to support you in this process. The reformulation of the title of this process, that you proposed in your introductory remarks — "The role of the General Assembly in strengthening the United Nations system" — is acceptable to my delegation.

The vitality of the General Assembly, as with any other body or organization, is measured against the yardstick of its results, compared with its objectives and the wherewithal it has to discharge its mission. Thus, the issues of revitalization themselves constitute a questioning of the effectiveness of the methods of action of the General Assembly, the efficiency of the actions it mandates and the relevance of its working methods. Therefore, the exercise that brings us together is an invitation to introspection without complacency for all Member States in order both to identify the weaknesses and the failings of the General Assembly and to determine each actor's share of responsibility, in order to identify appropriate solutions.

In this regard, the Senegalese delegation joins previous speakers in expressing its concern at the delay in the issuance of the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of resolutions having to do with revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, as requested in resolution 61/292 dated 2 August 2007.

With respect to the implementation of resolutions, my delegation is of the view that that is the major barometer of the effectiveness of our work. In this area, it is vital that we — Member States and the Secretariat — make coordinated efforts, if we want to prevent the General Assembly from becoming, as one of our colleagues has ironically defined it, "a body that adopts resolutions that no one takes into account". That definition, although somewhat exaggerated, is sufficiently instructive concerning our method of action, for let us acknowledge along with its author that the percentage of resolutions that are implemented, including those adopted by consensus, remains ludicrous.

Moreover, the case of resolutions 58/126, 58/316, 59/313 and 60/286 — all three having to do with revitalization of the General Assembly — are all eloquent proof of that. Similar situations that have a negative impact on the image of the General Assembly involve Member States as well as the Secretariat and merit our particular attention, with a view to possibly establishing a mechanism to monitor the implementation of resolutions.

However, beyond looking for specific solutions for implementing the results of our deliberations, we need to do more in-depth thinking on our possibilities for streamlining resolutions and the agenda of the General Assembly in a constructive spirit while respecting the rights of all Member States under the rules of procedure. Within that framework, the Bureau of the Assembly, whose role should be strengthened, could, following consultations with Member States, make recommendations to the Secretary-General in developing the agenda to adapt it to the challenges of the day.

In order to attract attention and to be worthy of its responsibilities, the General Assembly should consider more often topical matters that mobilize international public opinion so that it can make recommendations for action to the Secretary-General and other bodies, funds and programmes of the United Nations, or to Member States, or at least to express its opinion. It would also be desirable to strengthen certain positive initiatives, in particular the holding of thematic debates and informational meetings with the Secretary-General, which contribute to the revitalization of the General Assembly. It is only through that perspective that the General Assembly will have more visibility and enjoy better media coverage, notwithstanding the efforts that the Secretariat should make in this area.

Additionally, a dynamic and proactive Assembly, fully playing the role given to it by the United Nations Charter, could contribute to creating conditions for more balanced and effective cooperation among the principal organs of the Organization. Along those same lines, we should consider improving our working methods to ensure that Assembly meetings will not take place in a half-empty room, as is often the case.

On that subject, it would be appropriate for the President of the Assembly to suggest at the beginning of each meeting, as is authorized by the rules of procedure, a time limit for delegations to speak in order to allow all Member States to express themselves within a reasonable amount of time.

During the Assembly's sixty-first session, it was my privilege — along with my colleague and friend, Ambassador Daniele Bodini, Permanent Representative of San Marino — to be chosen by the President to conduct consultations with Member States on the revitalization of the General Assembly. After more than 80 meetings with Permanent Representatives of Member States, six interactive debates and a number of informal meetings, we produced a report that, I believe, could be a good basis for the work of our present and future deliberations on this deliberative body, whose membership includes all United Nations Member States.

My delegation hopes that the open-ended Working Group will be rapidly established and allow us to conduct open, transparent and inclusive discussions in the well-understood interests of all nations and all peoples represented here. To our colleagues, the Permanent Representatives of Poland and Paraguay, who were appointed by the current Assembly President to co-chair the Working Group, we convey our fervent hopes for complete success in the discharge of their exalted mission.

Mr. Álvarez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): We wish to offer Uruguay's gratitude for the excellent efforts by the Presidents of the General Assembly at its sixty-first and sixty-second sessions and also to the co-facilitators, the Permanent Representatives of San Marino and Senegal. We wish to congratulate the Permanent Representatives of Paraguay and Poland, who will conduct the work of the open-ended Working Group for the sixty-second session.

The General Assembly has a central role to play as the Organization's principal deliberative, policymaking and representative organ. Yet, recent years have produced a marked perception of decline in the Assembly's prestige. Among the diagnosed causes for that perception are the endless and outdated agendas, the production of mandates for the Secretariat that are sometimes vague or that lack adequate financing, and the excessive application of the consensus rule in the Assembly's decision-making, which has meant that those decisions reflect the minimum common denominator of different existing opinions — which in some cases are contradictory — and reflect as well generalities that are remote from any commitment or action by the Assembly.

With respect to the revitalization of the General Assembly, there is, in our opinion, a confused perception. The problem does not lie so much in Assembly reform as in the Assembly's fully exercising its powers derived from the Charter, in particular those related to peace and security. For example, the General Assembly cannot make recommendations in the areas

related to Article 12 of the Charter or on those items under consideration by and on the agenda of the Security Council. However, it can debate those items, the most important aspects on the international agenda, and in some cases it can reaffirm a decision of the Security Council, legitimizing the decision of that principle organ.

The main thrusts of a revitalization of the General Assembly must include the following points.

On the rationalization of its work, this must take place mainly through reducing the number of items on the agenda, beginning with those that everyone knows have lost validity and interest. The General Assembly must approach in a focused manner the items of greatest and most topical interest, including international migration, global health, human rights, humanitarian emergencies and the fight against terrorism. An example of such rationalization can be found in the thematic debates that have been developing during the two most recent Assembly presidencies. The specific interests of States regarding an eventual elimination of items from the agenda would be given ample consideration in rules 13, 14 and 15 of the Assembly's rules of procedure.

The operation of the Assembly's committees should be redefined, structuring their work in a manner that would permit results-based analysis and improve the criteria for assigning mandates to the Secretariat. These issues must be studied not from a formalistic or bureaucratic point of view, but rather from one in which decisions are based on specific requirements for the implementation of the mandates, attempting, at the same time, to acquire funds for the mandates that are related to the substantive agenda items. We must study the structure and operation of the committees, as well as oversight mechanisms for their work and results.

And the last point, which we feel is very important, is the implementation of the decisions of the heads of State or Government contained in the 2005 Outcome Document on the expansion and deepening of the relations of the United Nations General Assembly with non-governmental organizations. This is with respect to the main items that we believe should be considered in a reform.

But, furthermore, we support what was decided in resolution 61/292 — that is, to assess and reconsider the state of implementation of the most relevant resolutions in order to identify paths that would make it possible to have a more authoritative, efficient and effective General Assembly, one that would build on past achievements.

Uruguay maintains its negotiating position for overcoming the current situation, namely, prioritizing the effective implementation of the mass of already approved resolutions, as well as making progress on those that are still pending. We would be in favour of measures that aim to eliminate bureaucratic obstacles and the duplication of effort, as well as of measures that call for a rational use of resources. This would help to achieve action that is more in line with current needs of the Organization and its Members.

Mrs. Aitimova (Kazakhstan): At the 2005 World Summit, Member States reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening the United Nations with a view to enhancing its authority and efficiency, as well as its capacity to effectively address the full range of challenges of our time.

In this regard, the delegation of Kazakhstan commends the Secretary-General for his determination to breathe new life and inject renewed confidence into a strengthened United Nations that is effective, efficient, coherent and accountable. In our view, the reform of the United Nations should be geared, first and foremost, to the consolidation of the international community in pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

We should focus our efforts on enhancing the effectiveness of our Organization. As members of the community of nations, we should work to improve the image of the United Nations as the bastion of peoples' hopes and aspirations.

Recently, I had the chance to meet with some students from a college here in the United States. When I presented myself as the Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the United Nations, many young people wanted to know more about our activities and responsibilities, about our current and future positions. This means that the new generation would like to see us more effective and more responsible.

Kazakhstan believes that a United Nations General Assembly playing a greater role and with improved status will promote genuine democracy in international relations. The General Assembly should have a central position as the chief deliberative,

policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations.

Kazakhstan notes certain progress in the efforts to improve the Assembly's efficiency and working methods. Yet we believe that this process should not replace reforms that are aimed, first and foremost, at strengthening the Assembly's authority. The delegation of Kazakhstan commends the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session, Her Excellency Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, for her efforts to increase the visibility of the Assembly and for holding four informal thematic debates on partnerships towards achieving the MDGs: taking stock, moving forward; gender equality and the empowerment of women; civilizations and the challenge for peace: obstacles and opportunities; and climate change as a global challenge — all which offered the Members States excellent opportunities to debate some of the most pressing challenges facing the international community.

We would also like to commend the two facilitators Ambassador Badji, the Permanent Representative of Senegal, and Ambassador Bodini, the Permanent Representative of San Marino, for their tireless efforts in leading consultations on this issue. We also note resolution 61/292 on revitalizing the role and authority of the General Assembly and strengthening its performance.

As the reports of the two facilitators indicates, all Member States have a strong desire to revitalize the General Assembly and to strengthen its efficiency. We believe that it is very important to continue our work and to implement all General Assembly resolutions on its revitalization.

Kazakhstan expresses its strong support for the suggestion of more dialogue and less monologue, as well as the idea to convene debates on important themes such as climate change, the MDGs, counter-terrorism, management reform, Security Council reform and others. The idea of establishing the practice of regular, informal briefings by the Secretary-General in the General Assembly is also a practice that can bring us closer to solving important problems.

We hope that a new, updated report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolutions on revitalization will provide a solid basis for our further deliberations on this important issue. Furthermore, we call on the President of the General Assembly to establish, in accordance with the resolution 61/292, the ad hoc working group on the revitalization of the General Assembly.

We sincerely hope that under this Presidency we will be able to make solid progress on this important issue and we stand ready to support you, Mr. President, in your endeavours in this regard.

Mr. Dapkiunas (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): For our delegation, the question on revitalizing the work the General Assembly is of high priority. This issue is also important for the Non-Aligned Movement, whose statement Belarus supports.

During the previous session of the General Assembly, we adopted a resolution on strengthening the Assembly's role and authority. Unlike previous resolutions, this document is procedural. Unfortunately, during the negotiating process on the draft resolution, a number of clear and substantive proposals — which could have strengthened the central role of the General Assembly in developing significant decisions on issues on the international agenda — were blocked. We are convinced that a draft resolution on revitalizing the work of the Assembly with greater practical content would meet, to a greater extent, the interests of Member States.

We believe that the consultation process and revitalizing the work of the Assembly must be put back on a constructive track. The delegation of Belarus is concerned about the delay in the issuance by the Secretary-General, for the consideration of Member States, of updated data to his report on the implementation of resolutions on the revitalization of the work of the Assembly. This data was called for in resolution 61/292 and our delegation had expected it ahead of time, before today's meeting of the General Assembly.

A key element of resolution 61/292 is the establishment, at the sixty-second session, of a working group to analyse the implementation of Assembly decisions, the revitalization of the General Assembly and the making the relevant recommendations. We intend to actively participate in the work of that group. Our own independent, preliminary analysis of the status of the implementation of decisions regarding the revitalization of the work of the Assembly has identified a number of important provisions that are not being fully implemented or are not being implemented

at all. It is our intent to share these conclusions with the group.

Moreover, we hope that a survey of the extent of implementation of resolutions on the revitalization of the work of the Assembly will proceed expeditiously and be used above all to develop new proposals to be enshrined in the new resolution with a view to their subsequent effective implementation. We also believe that repetitive language should be used sparingly and with clear justification of its relevance by the author.

In selecting a format for the negotiation process, we believe that we must take into account the positives and negatives of negotiating methods used in prior sessions, in particular the sixty-first session. The Belarus delegation calls for transparent consultations and for the opportunity to be made available to all interested States Members of the United Nations to participate in all phases.

In our view, a starting point and basis for the forthcoming work on a resolution could be the following provisions, which were approved in prior consultations and which, in our view, enjoy significant support from a large number of delegations.

First, we need to enhance the role of the General Assembly in resolving issues relating to international peace and security, in particular by broadening opportunities for United Nations Member States to convene special emergency sessions of the General Assembly. The Security Council should adopt the practice of preparing periodic analytical reports on topical issues on the international agenda for consideration by the General Assembly. A big step forward would be the strengthening of the principle of equitable regional rotation in the selection of the Secretary-General. Introducing a cogent and transparent rule of regional rotation would help to enhance the atmosphere of trust between Member States and allay the unnecessary tension that, unfortunately, is sometimes inherent in the process of electing the head of the Secretariat.

The Secretariat must increase the level of media coverage of the General Assembly's activities and strike the right balance in publicizing the work of the United Nations principal organs. This year, thanks to the Presidents of the General Assembly at its sixty-first and sixty-second sessions, we have had very interesting debates on topical issues on the international agenda. Many substantive statements and proposals have been made from this rostrum that should become, via the leading media outlets, part of the heritage of broader world public opinion.

We believe that we also need to rationalize the work of the Main Committees of the General Assembly by reducing the time for the consideration of issues inscribed on a number of agenda items. Introducing such an element of discipline would lead to the more effective use both of delegations' working time and of the resources devoted to conference servicing.

A further step towards the more effective use of time could be the introduction by the General Assembly of an opportunity for interested States to make brief oral statements, supplemented by the distribution in the Hall of longer written statements on various issues. The verbatim and summary records would, of course, include the full versions of each statement. In our opinion, that would ultimately help to reflect the positions of States on agenda items, while reducing the resources used by conference services.

Our delegation is convinced that the President of the General Assembly should be provided with the same protocol services as the Secretary-General, including when the President visits United Nations Member States. That would allow us, not in words but in deeds, to demonstrate the lofty and unique status of the General Assembly. It is also important to enhance the role of the Assembly's Vice-Presidents in its work by increasing their practical participation in coordinating consultations on the most important and complex issues on the agenda.

Finally, we feel that we should revert to an issue that was actively discussed among the regional groups at the last session. In our view, the General Assembly must restore fair regional representation in the General Committee. A practical model for a decision on that topic could be developed in consultations on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly.

Mr. Mohamed (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Yemen, I should like to extend our thanks and gratitude to you, Sir, for your leadership of this important meeting. I also thank the former President of the General Assembly, Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, for her efforts in the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly. I wish her success in all her future endeavours.

I also take this opportunity to pay tribute to the two facilitators, the Permanent Representatives of San Marino and Senegal, for their excellent efforts in guiding the consultations of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly, which were occasionally very complex. We further welcome the Permanent Representatives of Poland and Uruguay, who will conduct the consultations on this difficult task at the current session.

My delegation also supports the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Algeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Yemen has followed with great interest the question of the revitalization of the General Assembly over the past few sessions. Today, we are debating the item because of the General Assembly's pivotal role as the main deliberative body of the United Nations, in which all Member States are represented on an equal footing and policies are developed and debates convened.

The revitalization of the General Assembly is aimed at strengthening its authority and role and enabling it to assume its responsibilities and competences in accordance with the Charter. It would also limit the encroachment by the Security Council on the General Assembly's purview. We feel that the Council's gradual encroachment on the Assembly's competencies has generated increasing tension and disharmony between the two organs and will eventually lead to paralysis of the Assembly, which in turn would prevent it from playing its role and discharging its responsibilities and mandates according to the Charter.

We therefore feel that the revitalization of the General Assembly must be a priority in the comprehensive reform process, allowing it to succeed in its role. It would also require us to eliminate redundancy, duplication and the discussion of the same item in more than one body of the United Nations, and would permit the Assembly to focus on issues to the tangible benefit of all the peoples of the world.

My delegation stresses the importance of establishing an ad hoc working group, pursuant to paragraph 2 of resolution 61/292, on the revitalization of the General Assembly, open to all Member States, to evaluate and assess the status of implementation of relevant resolutions, to identify ways to further enhance the role, authority, effectiveness and efficiency of the Assembly. We also call for an accelerated report of the Secretary-General on the status of the implementation of the resolutions of the General Assembly in the aforementioned resolution. Such reports should be issued early enough to allow us sufficient time to discuss them in the Main Committees or in plenary.

We are concerned that the work of the Council is being stymied by the excessive use of the right of veto, which prevents the Council from assuming its main role in the maintenance of international peace and security. We therefore feel that the General Assembly has an important role to play in strengthening international peace and security when the Security Council fails to do so, particularly given the fact that all Member States are represented without exception in this organ and that no select few are endowed with additional privileges.

We should therefore acknowledge the focal role of the General Assembly in the maintenance of international peace and security, since such a role is not the exclusive purview of the Security Council. This is a matter for all Member States, and it should not be reserved for a select few where differences among them, when they occur, often obstruct the passing of appropriate resolutions. Yemen realizes the important role of the General Assembly in selecting and appointing the Secretary-General, and we support the Assembly's efforts in this respect. We stress that the selection of the Secretary-General must be done in a more transparent and inclusive manner and must involve all Member States in accordance with the Charter.

The strengthening of the Office of the President of the General Assembly means that we are strengthening the authority of the General Assembly. The Assembly President will not be able to undertake his role as facilitator if we fail to allow the Office to have sufficient and qualified human resources. We welcome the periodic meetings with the Presidents of the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, and we call for those meetings to continue so that more coordination is achieved among the programmes of all three bodies. That would encourage their cooperation to become complementary, improving the performance and increasing the credibility and the role of the Organization.

Mr. Wolff (United States of America): I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this important issue today, although I note the sparse attendance in the Hall, which I hope does not reflect either a lack of interest or any sense of futility regarding this subject matter.

At the outset, I would like to recall the conclusions drawn by the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. The Panel noted that the General Assembly's capacity

> "is often squandered on debates about minutiae or thematic topics outpaced by real-world events. Its inability to reach closure on issues undermines its relevance. An unwieldy and static agenda leads to repetitive debates". (*A/59/565, para. 241*)

Unfortunately, in our view, these obvious shortcomings are now threatening to undermine the very process of Assembly reform; indeed, the agenda item under consideration is at risk of falling victim to the very same deficiencies it seeks to rectify.

Prior debates on General Assembly reform have produced valuable and insightful, if modest, recommendations, including those put forward by the Co-Chairs at the sixty-first session, Ambassadors Bodini and Badji. However, few of those recommendations have been able to alter significantly the prevailing "business as usual" mind-set. In the past few weeks alone, we have witnessed the passage of many resolutions whose texts have not been significantly revised in decades, contributing to an increased perception of the Assembly's irrelevance. This dangerous slide towards irrelevance is displayed, for instance, in the stark contrast between the static and unbalanced resolutions on the situation in Palestine and the reinvigorated effort to achieve tangible progress on the ground. Some of the most vocal proponents of these outdated resolutions are the same countries involved in the very effort underway this week to launch a process at Annapolis that we hope will lead to a permanent Israeli-Palestinian peace.

We have also recently witnessed renewed interest in the reform of other United Nations organs, including the Security Council. As President Kerim noted in his concluding statement on 14 November (see A/62/PV.51), one of the seven pillars of Security Council reform is the necessity of reforming the greater United Nations system. Clearly, meaningful reform of the United Nations system must include meaningful reform of the General Assembly, including in areas such as the financing of and decision-making by the Organization.

The convening of the current session's ad hoc working group represents a new opportunity for Member States to reinvigorate their efforts and take ownership of the General Assembly's effectiveness and credibility. The onus of restoring the public's trust in the Assembly's ability to respond to real-world issues falls on our collective shoulders.

How do we accomplish this task? First, we must be guided by the mandate of the working group as established in resolution 61/292 — that is, we must evaluate and assess the status of implementation of relevant resolutions on revitalization and identify ways to further enhance the role, authority, effectiveness and efficiency of the Assembly. Those two proposals are not mutually exclusive. In fact, we believe that the best way to enhance the role, authority, effectiveness and efficiency of the Assembly is by implementing these relevant resolutions.

In this regard I would like to highlight several recommendations contained in the relevant resolutions that seek to reform the General Assembly's working methods.

There is a clear need to rationalize the Assembly's programme of work by focusing its efforts on addressing contemporary challenges. We must discard the outdated debates recycled year after year, which are no longer reflective of current realities.

Greater cooperation among the principal organs, as well as between the General Assembly and its Main Committees, will enhance their ability to carry out their competencies, as mandated in the Charter. Greater cooperation will also help streamline agendas and reduce wasteful overlap and inter-organ power struggles.

Member States should exercise discipline in their submission of draft resolutions in the Assembly. Adopting resolutions on outdated or obscure topics diminishes the credibility of this body, while selectively recalling language from previous resolutions weakens their standing.

These recommendations, and numerous others contained in resolutions from past sessions, provide ample material for initiating lasting reform. In the sixty-second session, the working group must take

stock of the status of implementation of these proposals, identifying improvements made and areas in which tangible results remain elusive. The constructive and painstakingly negotiated proposals contained in previous resolutions have already established the path to revitalization. Now it is our collective responsibility to follow that path to its logical conclusion: a dynamic and responsive General Assembly that is capable of forging consensus on issues of greatest contemporary importance.

My delegation looks forward to working closely with you, Mr. President, and with our counterparts from other delegations to capitalize on this opportunity to achieve concrete reform.

Mr. Tarragô (Brazil): It is not an overstatement to characterize the revitalization of the General Assembly as one of the key systemic issues requiring attentive consideration and action. Restoring the vitality of the Assembly demands the strengthening of the authority and the role of the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations. It also means organizing and conducting its work in a manner consistent with its proper, central place in the debate of and the search for solutions to the pressing problems of today's international agenda.

The path towards those goals has been a long one, but there has been progress. The conceptual basis of the revitalization was clearly laid out in a set of resolutions adopted in the latest sessions of the Assembly. Additionally, as indicated in the Secretary-General's report of October 2006 (A/61/483), concrete measures have been taken in areas such as, for example, the role of the President and the working methods of this organ.

It is now time to implement decisions already agreed upon. One example in the critical area of the role and authority of the General Assembly comes to mind. As recalled in the past, this Assembly is clearly empowered to discuss issues pertaining to the maintenance of international peace and security, without prejudice to the prerogatives of the Security Council. One possible vehicle for this could be the thematic debates we initiated precisely as a result of our efforts to revitalize the Assembly. We believe it would be fitting for the President of every session to suggest an increased number of topics related to international peace and security to be discussed by the membership. This exercise would strengthen the indispensable dialogue between the Security Council and those on whose behalf it acts. The Council would benefit from valuable input offered by delegations, while the Assembly would enhance the participation of Member States in better-informed decisions that may affect direct legitimate interests.

Another important aspect of our efforts to revitalize the Assembly regards the selection of the Secretary-General. The discussions held in the sixty-first session were quite useful. We see as significant the relevant paragraphs of resolution 60/286. Full compliance with the decisions therein will allow the General Assembly to become more involved in such selection. When the right time comes, it will be especially important that the selection of the Secretary-General be as inclusive and transparent as possible. The Organization will also benefit from serious consideration of the invitation extended to the Security Council to update the Assembly on steps it takes in this regard.

Behind these concrete measures lies the crucial notion of checks and balances among the principal United Nations organs. We believe that the United Nations will be strengthened if we manage to set up a relationship that is truly complementary and mutually reinforcing, with proper balance among its organs, in accordance with the Charter. Clearly, the optimum functioning of the system as envisaged in the Charter would be facilitated by meaningful reform of the Security Council. A more representative and transparent Council would support a vital and active General Assembly, just as a revitalized Assembly would invigorate its trust in an effective and responsive Council.

These are some key perspectives that Brazil will take with it to the Ad Hoc Working Group established by resolution 61/292. We believe that the Group has a contribution to make at this juncture of our work. Its main tasks will be to help us implement what has been decided and to pursue consideration of ways to further improve the work of the General Assembly.

We are interested in moving expeditiously. We were reassured by your letter of 8 November and your commitment, Sir, to appointing chairs of the Working Group, which you have done. We must now resume focused work on this key systemic issue, sooner rather than later.

On this occasion, I would like to congratulate the Permanent Representatives of Paraguay and Poland on their designation to conduct consultations in the Ad Hoc Working Group. My delegation is ready to cooperate with you, Mr. President, and with the Co-Chairs in the Working Group on moving forward this important item on our agenda.

Mr. Hermida Castillo (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation considers this item one of the most important on the agenda of the sixty-second session of the General Assembly, since we are referring to the principal deliberative policymaking and democratic organ of the United Nations. Revitalization is an integral part of the comprehensive reform of the Organization, with the objective of making it more effective and efficient. It is a dynamic process, in accordance with the parameters established in the Charter, in the 2005 Outcome Document and in the Millennium Summit.

In order to maintain harmony and the balance established in the Charter, we have to uphold the functions and powers that the Charter gives to the principal organs of the United Nations, mainly to the General Assembly. To have effective multilateralism, and in order to maintain the Assembly's role as the main forum for debate and the resolution of global problems, we have to respect the jurisdictions established for every organ.

The Security Council, therefore, should not encroach on the functions of other organs establishing standards, legislative texts and even definitions — questions that directly concern the functions and powers of the General Assembly and of the Economic and Social Council. For the smooth operation of the Assembly, the United Nations has to have sufficient resources to comply with and to implement the programmes and activities that have been entrusted to it through the mandates established by the resolutions adopted.

We are in agreement with the President of the General Assembly and support him with action on the five points he has identified as global priorities of our time — that is, climate change, financing for development, the implementation of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, the follow-up to measures to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and internal reform of the United Nations. However, we should add to these five points the role played by the General Assembly in the maintenance of international peace and security, especially in those cases where the Security Council does not deal with situations that involve crimes against humanity, war crimes, genocide or ceasefires. This means that the Assembly should adopt the corresponding measures to resolve the matter when the Council does not comply with its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, as was recommended by the heads of State and Government at the Havana Summit of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

In order to work well, we must have the necessary tools, in the same way that delegations, in order to have an adequate, deep, extensive or comprehensive debate, must rely on the documentation published by the Secretariat. However, by last Friday evening we still had not seen the report of the Secretary-General. Last year this report was published on 2 October. We believe that this situation should not recur.

Other issues that we have seen in this session involve lack of wisdom regarding the number of meetings that are assigned to certain items in plenary. We have seen in the Journal on many occasions that for a specific item — for example, Security Council reform — only one or two meetings are scheduled, when four or five are needed. We believe that this could be easily resolved if we simply considered the number of meetings that the item warranted at a previous session or, if it is a new item, the interest shown in it by delegations in informal meetings or in the cooperation by delegations in the drafting of reports of the Secretary-General.

In the subsidiary bodies of the General Assembly and in the functional commissions, five or six meetings are sometimes scheduled at the same time, making it impossible for small or medium-sized delegations to take part in all of the meetings for staff reasons.

In the Sixth Committee, there was an overlapping of meetings with consultations on the Law of the Sea and Sustainable Fisheries. This runs counter to the written provision in operative paragraph 133 of resolution 61/222, in which the General Assembly decided "to ensure that the consultations are scheduled in such a way as to avoid overlap with the period during which the Sixth Committee is meeting".

In spite of these small snags that can be easily resolved by the Secretariat, the process of

revitalization has also had its successes and achievements with, for example, the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council, with the programming of interactive debates and items that are chosen for the debates and with the selection of new dates on which the General Assembly elects its President, Vice-Presidents and the Chairmen of the Main Committees. We have thereby strengthened the coordination and preparation of work between the Main Committees and the plenary, as well as the role of the Bureau.

We are convinced that, with the efforts of all States and the necessary political will, the process of revitalizing the General Assembly could achieve the results desired and strengthen the process of democratizing and reforming the United Nations itself that humankind awaits.

Mr. Nguyen Tat Thanh (Viet Nam): On behalf of the Vietnamese delegation, I wish to express our high appreciation to Ambassador Badji of Senegal and Ambassador Bodini of San Marino for their dedicated efforts to the revitalization of the General Assembly.

My delegation also wants to support the statement made earlier by the representative of Algeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

For the past 16 years, in order to enable the United Nations to better address global issues and contemporary transnational threats, Member States have acknowledged the growing importance of revitalizing the work of the General Assembly and have contributed a fair amount of resources to that end. Many initiatives and ideas have been introduced and commendable efforts have been made. Difficult issues have been highlighted and brought into better focus. It is clear to us all, however, that the result that we want to achieve is still far ahead.

The World Summit Outcome Document, while reaffirming the central position of the General Assembly as the chief deliberative and policymaking and most representative organ of the United Nations, calls for strengthening the relationship between the General Assembly and the other principal organs of the Organization to ensure better coordination on topical issues that require collective action by the United Nations, in accordance with their respective mandates.

Resolution 60/286 underlines the pivotal role of the General Assembly on global matters of concern to the international community, and at the same time sets out wide-ranging proposals to improve the role and authority of the General Assembly and its working methods.

Most recently, Member States have been engaged in interactive debates and concerted consultations on the contemporary work of the General Assembly, and adopted by consensus resolution 61/292, which again underscored the commitments to the revitalization agenda. In that connection, we are fully convinced that the upcoming report of the Secretary-General on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly will lead us further ahead in that ongoing process. We also look forward, Sir, to your leadership and guidance. In the meantime, my delegation wishes to share the following points.

Considering that the revitalization of the General Assembly constitutes one of the most essential elements of the comprehensive reform process of the United Nations and should therefore be accorded continued priority, my delegation notes with satisfaction that many measures have been taken by Member States and the Secretariat to implement relevant provisions of resolutions. Initial improvements have been made and should be extended on such critical fronts as periodic meetings between the Presidents of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, and the holding of thematic debates during the Assembly's main sessions.

On another note, we share the views of many Member States that much remains to be done to enhance the role of the General Assembly, its presidency and its working methods; the selection and election process of the Secretary-General; as well as the effective implementation of the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly. Close cooperation and coordination between the General Assembly and other principal organs of the United Nations, other international institutions and civil society, as well as among the Main Committees and subsidiary bodies of the General Assembly, should be further consolidated in compliance with their respective functions and powers, thereby maximizing efficiency and avoiding duplication.

It is also a continued priority to rationalize and streamline the agenda of the General Assembly and review its mandates, taking into full account the core

interests and concerns of the larger membership, especially the developing countries, in the fields of international peace and security, development and human rights. Equally important, due attention should be paid to the consolidation of reports with a view to ensuring overall quality and reducing heavy burdens on Member States, in particular those represented by small delegations.

The revitalization of the General Assembly will be strengthened only when the general membership displays the political will and determination to enable the General Assembly to discharge its role and responsibility as envisaged in the Charter. Our efforts in that exercise must be guided by the principles of democracy, transparency and accountability. In that connection, my delegation believes that a working group on the revitalization of the General Assembly, as called for in resolution 61/292, should be established without delay, and that Member States should engage in in-depth discussions with an eye to identifying the appropriate and practical ways to move the revitalization process to fruition.

Finally, may I assure you, Sir, of Viet Nam's continued efforts to work with you and Member States in that important endeavour.

Mr. Takasu (Japan): I would like to express my appreciation to you, Sir, for convening today's meeting to discuss one of the most important agenda items, the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly.

The General Assembly, as the principal organ of the United Nations represented by every Member State equally, is mandated to take up any question or matter within the scope of the United Nations Charter. The General Assembly plays a central role in making decisions on and implementing United Nations reform. Under General Assembly resolutions, we have established the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council, and have discussed such other important reform issues as Security Council reform and management reform.

We must perceive the revitalization and strengthening of the General Assembly as a vital issue that is geared to strengthening the functioning of the United Nations itself. I wish to discuss four points today that I think require priority attention.

First, I would like to encourage Member States to actively discuss in the General Assembly the most relevant and pressing issues of the day. In that respect, Japan extends its full cooperation and support to your initiatives, Sir, to hold major thematic debates and panel discussions in order to establish broad international understanding of current substantive issues of importance to Member States and to raise political attention and momentum. In that respect, we commend the good discussion at the High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development held in October, under your guidance. The debate on the report of the Security Council and the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council was also conducted in a constructive spirit from 12 to 14 November, with the participation of a large number of Member States. It has contributed to raising political momentum for the forthcoming intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform, under your leadership, and to producing concrete results during the current session. It will be another busy year for the General Assembly in 2008. Japan is fully committed to rendering its full support to the Panel's discussion on climate change to be held in February, as well as the meetings on management reform, counter-terrorism and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). We are prepared to actively participate in these meetings. However, thematic debates must be prepared carefully and well in advance, if they are to be useful and to achieve their intended objectives.

Secondly, Member States and the United Nations Secretariat must do their utmost to improve the work of the General Assembly and its decisions in order to make them more effective and constructive. Rationalizing the General Assembly's agenda and streamlining resolutions will help it to focus its work more on priority issues and to ensure that messages from the Assembly are action-oriented. Reducing the volume of documents submitted to the Assembly and combining some individual reports would help the Assembly to work more efficiently and effectively. These recommendations have been repeated many times in past General Assembly resolutions, but, so far, there is no marked improvement. The Secretariat should make concerted efforts to reduce the volume and cost of documentation.

Thirdly, in order to improve coordination among the principal organs of the United Nations, consultation among the leaders of those bodies — namely, the Presidents of the General Assembly, of the Security

Council, the Economic and Social Council and the Secretary-General himself, should be strengthened. We acknowledge the special efforts that the Secretary-General is making in this regard. We fully support the practice that Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon initiated to provide timely briefings to the General Assembly and to submit reports to it, if necessary, on specific issues. We also welcome the holding of regular meetings between the President of the Security Council and the President of the General Assembly to encourage consideration of issues of current international concern by the Assembly. Close working relations among the principal organs should be encouraged as a regular and continuous process.

My fourth point is on the implementation of the decision itself. I would like to stress the importance of the implementation of what has already been agreed by the General Assembly. Meaningful revitalization of the General Assembly is possible through the timely and effective implementation of the decisions and measures adopted. Implementation of General Assembly resolutions is critical to enhancing its credibility. At the same time, messages and requests by the General Assembly must be clear and precise for effective implementation. Mandates emerging from resolutions by the General Assembly should not be out-of-date or duplicated, nor should they contradict each other. Mandates should be revised regularly and streamlined to meet current requirements. Therefore, it is important that Member States agree to give fresh impetus to a committee on mandate review under the co-chairmanship of Ambassador Kaire Munionganda Mbuende of Namibia and Ambassador Rosemary Banks of New Zealand. An ad hoc working group on the revitalization of the General Assembly is also important in order to evaluate and assess the status of the implementation of relevant resolutions.

Japan looks forward to constructive discussion on this important agenda and to the achievement of concrete results in the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly.

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein): Mr. President, the topic under consideration today must be a priority issue for any President of the General Assembly. Strengthening the body over which you preside is both an obvious goal and a political necessity.

There is no doubt that the Assembly has, for a while now, not been playing the role foreseen for it under the United Nations Charter. This is a worrisome development, because a one-sided focus on the work of the Security Council is politically unhealthy and a threat to the institutional balance of this Organization.

We continue to see limited value in the now almost traditional exercise of negotiating some sort of comprehensive resolution on how to revitalize the General Assembly. The recent past, in particular, has made it quite clear that these efforts may produce some small political sparks and can also result in the consensual adoption of decisions and resolutions. They do not, however, bring about real political change. This is, in fact, not surprising. Why would a paradigm shift be created through an exercise that is, by and large, an expression of business-as-usual and thus of the political culture it is intended to change? Furthermore, the ad hoc committees and working groups mandated with the work on revitalization tend to produce texts of uncanny similarity and often lead to a repetition of the well-known statement that the problem of revitalizing the General Assembly is one of implementation or, more concretely, the lack thereof.

We do, of course, welcome the appointment this morning of our two colleagues from Poland and Paraguay, and we thank them for their willingness to take on this difficult task. Our suggestion would be that they should focus their work on perhaps just one aspect of revitalizing the General Assembly.

One key lesson from the past, to our mind, is the importance of leadership. This Assembly has been a politically more relevant body when headed by somebody who was willing to lead its activities and to give real guidance to the membership, on the basis, of course, of extensive consultations. Given the importance of the position of the President of the Assembly, it is quite remarkable that we do not pay more attention to the process of nominating and selecting our Presidents. It is clear, Mr. President, that not all of your predecessors knew this Organization as well as you do. In some instances, a newly elected President, after taking the helm of the Assembly, was quite surprised to find out what the position actually entailed. The presidency is not a protocol function; it is a position of leadership and political responsibility. We would, therefore, welcome consultations, under your overall guidance, conducted by the two co-Chairs, on how to improve the mechanisms through which the Assembly nominates and appoints its Presidents. There are a number of proposals from the past that we can

build on, relating to measures such as informal meetings with persons who have an interest in the position, through regional groups or otherwise, compilation of briefing material, and other means that can be drawn upon. If a concrete product on this issue was to be the only outcome under this item, we would consider it to be a good result.

In addition, of course, we wish to see a dynamic session of the Assembly under your leadership. We encourage you in particular to focus on the priority issues that you have outlined and to make frequent use of the format of informal plenary sessions. Such meetings might be even more useful and yield even more concrete results, if you present the members with a list of topics and questions that you wish them to address in connection with a particular issue. We also welcome briefings offered by the Secretary-General, such as the one given last week. We concur that such briefings should be held on specific opportunities, but we do not believe that these should arise exclusively in connection with travel activities. Also, we would welcome briefings that are more focused and limited to a small number of topics, perhaps even a single one. We also encourage you to organize similar opportunities with other high officials of the Secretariat, such as Under-Secretaries-General. Under-Secretaries-General, in particular, often complain about the lack of opportunity to engage with the membership, and informal plenary meetings are one obvious remedy.

Mr. Pokhrel (Nepal): On behalf of the delegation of Nepal, I appreciate the opportunity to discuss this important agenda item, on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly. In this regard, we commend your opening statement, Mr. President, and pledge Nepal's support in your endeavours in this regard. My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Algeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

We appreciate the call of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for a stronger United Nations for a better world. We cannot envisage a stronger United Nations without a strong and effective General Assembly. Therefore, the revitalization of the General Assembly is an important and unfinished item on the agenda of United Nations reform.

The General Assembly is the highest representative body of the United Nations. Its universal membership makes it the most authoritative policymaking organ of the United Nations. It is a matter of utmost priority for the membership of the United Nations that the General Assembly strengthen its deliberative, legislative and decision-making functions. Unless we strengthen these aspects, the General Assembly cannot be revitalized.

At the 2005 World Summit, world leaders called for revitalizing and strengthening the General Assembly; it is sad, however, that we have not been able to move forward in the revitalization of the General Assembly. Today, its functions are being encroached upon by other organs of the United Nations and taken over by bodies outside the Organization. Particularly worrisome is the increasing role of the Security Council in adopting resolutions of legislative nature, which would have otherwise required consideration by the General Assembly.

Revitalization of the Assembly can be achieved if we bring important subjects under its consideration. For example, the recent high-level event on climate change convened by the Secretary-General showed how much the Assembly can do to focus upon the world's most pressing issues. More such thematic debates on topical issues should be regularly convened in the Assembly.

Nepal supports the strengthening of the role of the Office of the President of the General Assembly and a more regular and institutionalized mechanism for consultations between the President and the heads of other organs of the United Nations. The President's Office should be backed with more resources.

We emphasize that we should strengthen the mechanism for implementing the decisions of the General Assembly. Similarly, we should be able to dispense with repetitive and obsolete mandates.

We welcome the continuation of the debate under this agenda item with the appointment of facilitators. Nepal pledges to work with other Member States to strengthen this important organ of the United Nations.

Mr. Amil (Pakistan): The Pakistan delegation would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this debate on General Assembly revitalization. We would like to align ourselves with the statement made by the representative of Algeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in his capacity as coordinator of the NAM working group. Let me take this opportunity to thank the representatives of

San Marino and Senegal for their hard work during the sixty-first session. We welcome your appointment of the new co-Chairs, the representatives of Paraguay and Poland, who will help guide our future work.

We also look forward to constructively participating in the deliberations on this important issue at this, the sixty-second session. The result of our deliberations should accommodate the interests and concerns of all United Nations Member States. We believe that the issue of revitalization of the General Assembly is a political and not a procedural issue. Where divisions persist, our collective efforts should be for consensus-building.

Pakistan remains concerned that the role and effectiveness of the General Assembly, as clearly spelled out in the Charter, has been considerably and continually eroded. Furthermore, we continue to urge full implementation of the previous General Assembly resolutions on revitalization. For our work to yield real results, our consultations should be conducted in a manner that is open and transparent, treating the issues in a holistic manner.

Our work at the sixty-first session resulted in resolution 61/292, which was procedural in nature and which served a two-fold purpose: to request an update report from the Secretary-General on the status of implementation of resolution 60/286, and to establish an open-ended working group at the sixty-second session. Unfortunately, the requested report has not yet been made available to Member States. Nor has the Secretariat indicated a date for its release. Our consideration of the report will therefore have to take place at a later stage, in the framework of the Open-ended Working Group. We would like to here restate our desire to see a substantive report from the Secretary-General that is analytical in nature and that addresses why there has been a lack of implementation on the revitalization of the General Assembly.

The General Assembly is the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations and must be enabled to play its central role effectively. In an increasingly globalized and interdependent world, multilateralism is not just desirable but also necessary. Against such a backdrop, the United Nations has a historic opportunity to play a lead role in world affairs, but it is seemingly failing to do so due to a lack of agreed vision among Member States.

Revitalization of the Assembly should therefore not be treated merely as a procedural issue relating to rationalization of agendas, curtailment of documentation and improvement of working methods. True revitalization of the General Assembly can occur only once the general membership shows the political determination to enable the Assembly to discharge its prescribed role and responsibility as envisaged by the Charter of the United Nations. Equally important is to arrest and reverse the erosion of the role and authority of the General Assembly, essentially by the Security Council and to a certain extent by the Secretariat.

For our delegation, the crux of revitalization is strengthening the authority and the role of the General Assembly. Prerequisites for achieving such an outcome necessitate, first, full respect for the Assembly's Charter role and functions; secondly, an end to the encroachment by the Security Council on issues within the Assembly's purview; thirdly, a renewed political commitment by all Member States to implement the Assembly's decisions on a non-selective and non-discriminatory basis; and finally, the provision of adequate financial resources to implement all mandated activities.

Some further ideas for consideration include the following. First, the General Assembly should be accorded a greater review and residuary role in peace and security, for example by reinvigorating historical procedures, such as "Uniting for Peace" (resolution 377 (v)), and addressing "ignored" issues relating to complex crises, including through the Economic and Social Council, the Peacebuilding Commission and other functional commissions.

Secondly, a General Assembly monitoring and implementation mechanism could be established to review and advise on the implementation of various decisions and recommendations adopted by the Assembly. This mechanism could be linked also to the mandate review exercise.

Thirdly, we would welcome regular briefings to the General Assembly by the Secretary-General.

Fourthly, the General Assembly should carry out closer examination of the deliberations and decisions of the Security Council.

Fifthly, it is clear, we believe, that the General Assembly's role in financial and administrative

management and oversight over all United Nations decisions and expenditures has to be bolstered.

We recognize that a key reason for the erosion of the Assembly's credibility and effectiveness is the non-implementation of its resolutions and decisions. We have in the past suggested the establishment of some form of mechanisms that can monitor the implementation of these resolutions. We would like to urge the membership to further explore this idea.

Last but not least, Pakistan supports efforts to strengthen the Office of the President of the General Assembly. We continue to recommend that the Secretary-General brief the President at least, perhaps, bi-monthly on all activities in the United Nations, particularly those of the Security Council. The President should also be authorized to request special briefings on any situation or issue by the Presidents of the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, and also by the Secretary-General. We recommend greater coordination in this area. In these endeavours, Pakistan will continue to work constructively so that the General Assembly's role as the principal deliberative, policymaking and most representative organ of the United Nations is restored.

Mr. Sow (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): An in-depth consideration of the ways and means to strengthen the role, authority, effectiveness and efficiency of the General Assembly is a central concern of States Members of our Organization. My delegation would like to express to you, Mr. President, our deepest appreciation for having given this item a due place on the agenda.

We would like to associate ourselves with the statement made by the representative of Algeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

I would like at the outset to commend the Working Group and, in particular, the two Facilitators for the sixty-first session, Ambassador Badji of Senegal and Ambassador Bodini of San Marino, for the productive and tireless efforts they made following March 2007 in conducting consultations, which led in August to the consensus adoption of resolution 61/292 on revitalizing the General Assembly.

In spite of the sensitive and complex nature of the subject, progress has been made, and my delegation welcomes it with interest. We cannot fail to welcome the increasingly central role the General Assembly is playing in the United Nations reform process and in the implementation of decisions stemming from conferences and summits of heads of State or Government. The result is the strengthening of cooperation and of balance between the General Assembly and the other principal organs, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the Secretariat, on the basis of the mandates that the Charter confers to each of them.

The holding of major thematic debates promotes interaction and agreement among Member States on major or urgent questions of substance or of topicality, dealing with a wide range of areas, including prevention and management of crises, the Millennium Development Goals, terrorism, climate change, dialogue among cultures and religions, and others.

Likewise, the active involvement of non-governmental organizations, civil society and the private sector in the process of exchanging ideas strengthens the General Assembly as a universal representative body and the principal deliberative organ of our Organization. My delegation is also pleased to note the strengthening of cooperation between the General Assembly and national and regional parliaments, in particular through the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

These positive and encouraging aspects in the process of revitalizing the General Assembly should not hide the obstacles and challenges that remain to be overcome so that progress will be irreversible. In this effort, we should maintain a better balance between the action of the General Assembly and that of the Security Council, shielding the former from being trampled by the latter. Once again, we should call on the Security Council to keep the General Assembly updated and better informed on measures it adopts and periodically to present reports to the General Assembly for its consideration, under Articles 15 and 24 of the Charter, on specialized subjects relating to topical issues of concern to the international community.

The revitalization of the General Assembly also requires the strengthening of the Office of its President, as well as the enrichment and consolidation of its institutional memory. The Assembly must, inter alia, make available financial and human resources for carrying out its most pressing programmes and action items.

With respect to the improvement of the working methods of the General Assembly, my delegation would hope for steady continued work on reviewing and streamlining the agendas of the General Assembly and its Main Committees. The time has come for the General Committee, as the main adviser to the Assembly, to be reactivated so that it can make concise recommendations on the Assembly's working methods, in accordance with resolution 58/316.

All follow-up measures and reform proposals should be contemplated and adopted openly, transparently and in a results-oriented way, based on the Organization's priority themes and objectives.

In concluding, I would like to emphasize that the implementation of General Assembly resolutions is one of the keys to revitalization. Therefore, I appeal to the Secretariat to continue, for that purpose, to provide useful information on the status of implementation of resolutions adopted in this area, including by updating its excellent report (A/61/483) in conformity with the spirit of resolution 61/292 of 2 August 2007.

I welcome the choice of our colleagues from Poland and Paraguay as Facilitators of the Open-ended Working Group on revitalization of the General Assembly, and I assure them of our delegation's cooperation.

Mr. Natalegawa (Indonesia): Mr. President, we thank you for convening this debate on the orientation of the entity that best represents the aspirations of the global community of nations. We also express our gratitude to the Permanent Representatives of Senegal and San Marino for their important work as Facilitators on revitalizing the role and authority of the General Assembly.

My delegation supports efforts at revitalizing the General Assembly's role and authority. It associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Algeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Efforts at revitalizing the General Assembly should aim at strengthening its role as the principal deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations. While we appreciate the efforts to empower the General Assembly and increase its efficiency, the Assembly can be considered revitalized only when certain fundamental factors are properly addressed. The implementation of General Assembly resolutions is one obvious necessity. Strong efforts need to be made in that direction. Certainly, there is need for the full implementation of all previous General Assembly resolutions on revitalization as soon as possible.

Revitalization also entails the realignment of the complementary relations between the General Assembly and the Security Council in a spirit of partnership and in full respect of the two organs' Charter-mandated responsibilities. A revitalized General Assembly is also one that demonstrates a capacity to address important international issues proactively. The holding of thematic debates is a welcome development. It is also one that enhances substantive dialogue and cooperation with the Economic and Social Council in the interest of promoting synergies. The recently established Peacebuilding Commission and Human Rights Council need support and guidance from a revitalized Assembly in the fulfilment of their challenging tasks.

Political will is of the essence, and Member States have to demonstrate it tangibly by bringing about a strong General Assembly. Indonesia supports and urges the implementation of previous General Assembly resolutions on revitalization. We share the concern of other delegations that the role of the Assembly has diminished over the years and that it has to be restored in line with its Charter mandate. My delegation would support a new substantive and comprehensive resolution to that effect.

Moving forward, we believe that the Assembly should adopt more streamlined and action-oriented resolutions. We should plan and organize our work in the various committees efficiently, including focused discussions. Repetition and overlapping of mandates should be avoided. However, rationalization of the work should not be forgotten at the expense of substantive matters.

Indonesia reiterates its cooperation and support in undertaking a comprehensive and meaningful revitalization of the General Assembly.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.